



UNION OF  
EPISCOPAL METHODISMS

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<i>AFTER SEPARATION, UNITY.</i>
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# UNION OF EPISCOPAL METHODISMS.

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## INTRODUCTION.

THE subject of the reunion of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, has for a considerable time been a matter of much and anxious thought by the best minds of both bodies. It has also been noted as a matter of interest to other religious bodies, and even statesmen not supposedly specially concerned with religious questions have counted it worthy of remark. Recently, notably since the Ecumenical Convention at the nation's capital, it has assumed greater prominence. The journals of both bodies have been loaded with elaborate articles on the subject. Several books have been written, ministers and laymen have made it a subject of interested conversation. It has been deliberated and debated in public and private, wide and deep interest has been awakened on the subject. It is hardly possible that it should be permitted to lapse without eliciting some action; indeed, such an outcome would be little short of a calamity. These circumstances, together with a profound interest in the subject, and deep personal convictions with respect to the duty of the hour, are the explanation of what is here written. Personally preoccupied with other matters requiring an overexpenditure of energies already overtaxed, I would have preferred to remain silent but for a sense of duty inconvenient to resist.

Though it might, to the superficial observer, seem to be a



matter of small moment, and of mere private concernment to a denomination, it is, as will appear, a matter of great public concern, in the right settlement of which all denominations and the nation itself have common interest.

Methodism is a sect, to be sure—a sect among many sects; its private affairs are matters chiefly of household interest in which the outside public do not share, but the question now mooted is not a private affair which affects itself only. Methodism, though a sect, is a great power for good or evil in the land. It ramifies the whole country, from the mountains to the gulf, from sea-board to sea-board. Its communicants count by many millions, and its adherents by many more millions. Its peculiar ecclesiasticism makes it a potent factor in the nation's weal with respect to questions which are rife among us to-day. Whether its power and agency for good shall be maintained is not an indifferent question. Historians and statesman, not partisans, have accorded to Methodism a place of conspicuous honor as a chief factor in improving the religious condition of Christendom in the last hundred years. Other sects have not been slow to admit it. Especially it is acknowledged to have been a prime instrument in cementing these States and in carrying religious and civilizing influences into their remote districts and along their rapidly advancing borders. It has done more to liberate thought, and yet to conserve faith and engender pious feeling, than any one agent, not simply in our own country, but in other Christian lands.

This especially is no time to look with indifference upon any thing that touches the power and vigor of this great Christian family. The age is surcharged with frightful forces. If there ever was a day when this great sect was needed to exert its utmost power and therefore be in its best condition it is to-day. Every patriot and every Christian, irrespective of name or creed, must

feel this; much more should every Methodist feel it. The question, then, is one of public and universal interest.

My hair was once black as the raven, it is now white as the snow. It is eventide. I shall soon cease to speak with voice or pen to my fellow-men; this consideration alone, were there none other, is sufficient to induce the desire and create the purpose that not one word shall be written in bitterness, or that, dying, I would wish to blot.

With respect to the practicability of the union of these two bodies, and with respect to the proper way of approaching it, and the necessary preliminary steps, there is room for difference of judgment and a demand for the exercise of patience and forbearance. For what is herein said I can only plead the most sincere respect for those who may differ from me in judgment.

The question is upon us whether we will or not. It is of nobody's foisting. It is born of existing facts which confront us and force attention. It will not longer be postponed. Inaction is positive action. At some time there must be the initiation of the proper consideration of the subject. That time seems fairly to be reached, and the initiative has already been taken.

It is well to pause at the threshold and cast about that we may not make mistakes or fall into misdirections. The opportunity for blunders is great; we want to avoid them. The way is difficult; we need to be careful. We are Christian brothers; the question we are to consider together is a vexing one, full of irritations; we want most of all to begin and progress with a Christian spirit, and determine that neither by word nor act will we carelessly or intentionally offend; and, more than that, that we will not find offense where none is intended. There are facts and fancies, opinions and measures, about which we shall disagree; this will arise from the fact that we are men. Let

us state our differences in temperate and respectful words. "*Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re,*" will remove all obstacles, if not at once, further on. Patience, not haste—candor, not harshness—simplicity of aim, will lead us to the true goal, whether it be or be not the one we aim at. There will be some who will be unwise, rasping, improvident of speech, unholy of temper. Let us not be decoyed by the lure. There are better guides and lights; if we keep close to them we shall not err. May the good God himself help us to think only of his glory, and so lead us that the outcome will be well pleasing to him!

When this discussion commenced it was not in my thought more than to write out a few reasons in favor of the reunion of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. It was not proposed even to discuss this subject, but only to submit a brief statement on a single point. Unexpectedly, as it progressed, other Methodisms came into the view and seemed to demand a share of the paper. Then, for more complete satisfaction, the view widened itself again, and the subject of sect, and the ground and warrant for sects and the laws which should regulate sect life, made demand. Thus the paper has without intention drifted almost into the proportions of a treatise. Still, the original purpose has not for a moment been lost sight of, and the wider discussion, it is hoped, will place it in a clearer light, while it may help in other directions.

With a persistence difficult to maintain I have refused to write a single word about the origin of the separation of these bodies, and the wrangles and acts and actors in that unhappy event, except simply to state the fact itself. And so, in referring to the other Methodisms, I have been equally abstemious of any censures or praises. The single question, "What is the duty of the hour?" has been kept steadily in view, and the dead past up to yesterday has been left to slumber in its grave.

It is hoped that the more fundamental matter and the subsidiary matter introduced, so intimately correlated with the main point in view, will help and not hurt the original objective point.

With a sweet and loving spirit, not more to my own, or less, than to others, and with no other thought or aim than to find what duty is, and to help to its easy performance, I say, "Come, brothers, let us reason together," with the hope that when we have reasoned we will agree to live together again in peace and harmony, and go forth as of yore an undivided band for the conquest of the world to our great Leader and Captain.

## SECTS, THEIR GROUNDS AND JUSTIFICATION.

As the chief object of this writing is to advocate the consolidation of certain sects into one greater sect it is appropriate to introduce the discussion by a brief consideration of the grounds for the existence of sects and the laws which limit and regulate the operation of sect life.

A sect is a division or fractional part of a whole. A Christian sect is a division or fractional part of the whole Christian body. The Church is a higher unity which aggregates and comprises and is composed of the fractional parts. No one fraction is the Church any more than any other fraction, but a sect merely of the whole. Neither antiquity, nor historical continuity from the ancient Church, nor tactual contact with it, nor any virtue arising therefrom or endowments thereby possessed, delivers any part from being a mere fraction or sect.

The one all-inclusive Church known and recognized of God as participant of the life of Christ, its living Head, embraces all regenerate souls of all the ages, and is of one essential spirit. No sect is ideally perfect either in its personal components, creed, or practice; but each partakes, to a greater or less extent, along with whatever good may be in it, of the inevitable accompaniments of human frailty and imperfection, a mixture of good and evil.

Any community of devout and spiritually-minded men and women, receiving the Holy Scriptures as the word of God, uniting themselves together for the worship of God, according to their honest convictions, and leading holy and blameless lives, is a true and real portion of his Church, and were there no other in the world would constitute the visible Church of God in the

earth, and would, even though without historic connection or tactual descent from the ancient apostolic Church, be entitled to exercise all the priestly and any other functions now exercised and enjoyed by any existing sect.

The largest and most widely disseminated sect has no more essential churchhood in it by reason of its size and respectability than the smallest; an ancient sect no more than the most recent; one of historic continuity and tactual connection with the earliest Christian community no more than one whose pedigree cannot be traced behind a decade, and who has no hand-touch with any other sect; but is wholly new-born, if so be it is born of the Spirit. Possibly the sect which shall yet surpass all former sects for soundness of creed and holiness of its personal constituents, and which in other respects will most completely body the Christ, is yet to be.

We thoroughly believe and accept these positions, and, doing so, affirm that sect life is not simply an existing fact, but is a justifiable fact, and that organic unity of the visible Church is not to be contended for as a necessity or under existing circumstance as possible, or, if possible, desirable. The existence of sects is not necessarily a sin, nor to be condemned, but may be both right and commendable. The time may come when a more general union will be practicable, and when lines of separation will be less rigid; but, if ever, it must be under different circumstances from any ever heretofore or at present existing.

The question whether a sect shall commence to exist, or, having commenced, shall continue to exist, must be determined, not on the ground of any absolute law, either expressed or unexpressed, but purely on the ground of whether its beginning or continuance has a sufficient reason—that is, a reason which enforces separation as a matter of conscience on one ground or another.

Shall a given sect extend itself here or there—shall it limit itself to these or those lines—must be determined by itself on the grounds of conviction of duty. There may exist sufficient reasons for a sect at one time and under one set of circumstances; and at another time and under another set of circumstances there may exist such reasons for its non-existence or its fusion with another sect as to make its continuance a sin.

## DETERMINING REASONS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF SECTS.

WHAT are the reasons determinative on Christian grounds for the existence of different sects or denominations among Christians?

Some sects arrogate great glory to themselves, by rating all other divisions of the Church as sects, and claiming for themselves that they are *the* Church; the sects are excluded. All such pretense is a cheap delusion or thin fraud, as the case may be.

We have already said there is but one Church; we now affirm that in that Church there are many legitimate sects, by which we mean simply that there are definite communities marked off for purposes of more harmonious and efficient Christian activity, each comprising a certain number of members of that one Church. These several communities differ in some degree in their interpretation and understanding of certain doctrines, and in their judgment as to what are the best methods, and these differences take names and fix distinctions or sect lines. Is this necessarily an evil? We are constrained to think not. It, like any other good, may be made the occasion of evil, or, as we think, it may be occasion of good—may be a good.

The Church, composed of all true believers of all the ages, exists through agency, and itself has a mission. Its mission is self-propagation. It does not exist for itself alone—for the delectation of its own constituents. It bears a commission to all unevangelized people. By means of the truth of which it is the divinely constituted custodian, and by means of the regenerate life of which it has become the recipient, and by means of its sacramental trusts and ordinances, it is not only commis-



sioned, but is required to go forth and propagate its life in other souls over all the world and to the end of the world.

Each soul is an individual part of the Church, and to it comes a measure of responsibility to carry forward this aggressive commission, and also to preserve and develop its own individual life. It so happens, growing out of the frailties of human judgment and the limitations of environment and faculty, that there arise differences, both as to doctrines and methods—differences which are more or less grave. When very grave, or so esteemed by those affected by them, conscience becomes involved, and dissent and protest and refusal of conformity are called forth; the unity of the body is disturbed, division already exists. Conformity must be surrendered, or rupture is inevitable. To enforce conformity is persecution—is to substitute the thumb-screw for the conscience.

The question inevitably arises whether the discordant elements shall go asunder or chafe within the body. That question must on Christian principles be determined by the answer to another question; that is, Which will probably be most conducive to the furtherance of the mission of the Church itself—which will be for peace and efficiency—which will be most likely in the long run to clear the truth and establish the best methods of church life and work?

Both the intelligence and conscience of the race have decided in favor of the right of individual judgment and the liberty of conscience—"in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity" That decision will never be reconsidered, re-argued, or revoked. Protestantism was born of it as a revolt against the dictation of the Roman hierarchy. Attempt at repression created two sects—the one, that which assumed the right to force; the other, that which claimed the right of dissent. That the existence of the former justified the existence

of the latter is questioned now only by the devotees of priestcraft. The deliverance of the race from an intolerable bondage, and the purification of the Church from superstitions, fables, and corruptions, and the growth and enlargement of knowledge, are the standing proofs of its wisdom.

The assumption of infallibility by an order of men, and of the right growing out of the infallibility to enforce conformity, in the presence of what we know of man, and in the light of history, is all that is necessary to justify protest, resistance, separation. In the two claims are the elements that eternalize error and legitimize the Inquisition and resort to imprisonments, tortures, and death. The principle which made Protestantism possible involves diversities of sects; and so long as the occasion exists it will produce them.

There is a limit to the application of the principle. The principle is liberty of judgment in the matter of doctrines and freedom of conscience in the matter of conformity. The right of dissent is from human interpretations and impositions. Absolute commandments and divine declarations of doctrine are authoritative and final. While the essence is held tolerance and charity will allow of difference, and the need of separation may not exist. For one cause and another there will be misuse of the principle, and separations will occur on insufficient grounds. Little sects will spring up, but will soon perish for the want of sufficient substance on which to live, or will never be able to justify their existence. History is full of such mere escapades of errant fancies or outbursts of restlessness. The Church needs to be patient and long-suffering with them; time removes the irritation, or forbearance prevents the evil from serious consequences. There are always meteors in the sky. They do not become planets; they merely flash and expire. So with a sporadic religious notion: it has

not power to create a sect, though it may make a temporary commotion.

In Protestantism, and Romanism, too, despite its despotic effort at repression, there are several permanent sects, which must be ranked as distinct portions of the one Church, some organically divided, some tolerated in the organism itself.

Christian sects which come to permanence and power are not produced by small causes or insufficient causes. They have a real reason, they exist because there is no help for it. The Church is loath to divide. It struggles against it, it prays against it. When at last division comes it is with pangs, and after every expedient has failed to prevent it. It does not come from oppressions and irritations merely or chiefly. These often attend it, and by superficial on-lookers are supposed to be the cause, and the division is charged to wickedness. There often is wickedness engendered by it, but the babe born, as a rule, is a holy thing. It is born of conviction, not of strife. Strife goes before and attends it, but down in the depths of the soul, in its holiest yearnings, in convictions and conscience, is the germ of its life.

Christianity is a life based on and growing from doctrines. Fallible minds are left to find what these doctrines are and what the meaning of this wonderful life is. The result is a creed or creeds. There is no escape from it.

Sects grow around and out of these creeds. The accepted creed is invested with the sacredness of divine authority and guarded as a holy trust. The interpretation is not infallible. Mistakes are made, abuses arise, disputes ensue, innovations are attempted, parties are formed, the brotherhood is rent with factions. The contending disputants cannot yield if the case is one of honest conviction, and if one of conscience they cannot keep silent or submit. Counsels are impotent, com-

promise impossible. They cannot remain together if one must dominate the other. Separation, harmful as it is, is the inevitable outcome; it is a less evil than internal strife, than enforced conformity, than the suppression of the right of private judgment and enslavement or bribing or outraging conscience. Thus sects are formed. There are good and sufficient reasons for them. Each, it may be, retains the great body of essential truth. Each may be equally Christian with the other, and may be component parts of the greater Church. In the matter of dispute perhaps neither is right, but each thinks itself right; possibly out of the struggle truth makes advance. After a time, when the fogs of passion have cleared away, and both parties, each learning something from the other, have come to see more clearly, charity begins its reconciling office, and fraternity and hearty good-will return. The dispute was sad and the result painful, but who dare say that either the one or the other was not a necessity growing out of human limitations, or that substantial good attainable in no other way was not gained? The children struggled in the womb. Who dare say that Augustine did not create a necessity for Pelagius, even though the error of the one was not less than that of the other?

Edwards must produce a Channing and a Taylor and a Hopkins, and a score of others. Over against Calvin there must come a Wesley, as over against Hildebrand there must come a Luther. One error is often corrected by another, and the two compel the relinquishment of each other and make way for nearer approach to the ideal which differs from both; truth was at neither extreme, but in the middle. Each of the great sects has had a good reason for its existence, and each has helped in some direction. None have reached the goal, but as they severally approach it they come nearer together, and by these contests, if conducted in a Christian spirit, are helping for-

ward the time when, by assimilation, one mistake after another being struck away by attrition, the sect lines will, if not wholly obliterated, so as that there will be no more sects, be rendered so unimportant and indistinct that they will become practically one; but the time is not yet. There is still much honest work to be done to bring about that day. Perhaps the goal of absolute truth and perfect method, where all honest contention will cease, will never be reached, but non-essential differences will cease to work separations.

In the truest convictions of large numbers of intelligent Christian men; in the demands of conscience; in the yet unsettled condition of beliefs; in the unharmonious and irreconcilable differences of judgment as to the best methods and forms of church government; in order to the greatest efficiency, and for the correction of errors both of doctrine and economy, and the more speedily to reach harmony and come to the ideal, are found the real reasons and the justifying reasons for the existence of the different sects. They are not only inevitable, but, when animated by the Christian spirit, they increase the efficiency of the Church, get more good work out of the body, and are indispensable to the attainment of the ideal which none of them as yet has reached. They are necessary to each other, making each better than it would be alone. No greater calamity could have happened than their non-existence, and no greater calamity could now happen than their obliteration. Their non-existence would have guaranteed the sole and perpetual domination of the papacy-corrupting and evermore becoming more corrupt, in the absence of the exercised right of criticism and dissent. What is the lesson history teaches?

Let the sects now be abolished and the same effects would follow. Instead of advance the plea for unity would soon override all investigation; centralization would repress free

action; reaction or unprogressive inaction would remand us again to the Dark Ages, or advancing intelligence would outgrow the Church and work its overthrow. Freedom, right of dissent, attrition of mind with mind, are the conditions of advance. Out of this trinal group of causes come sects. It is, in the order of God, the only road which, at first working division, at last leads to the only true organic unity—oneness of faith and oneness of government, or principles of action—if that ideal can ever be reached, which is doubtful. The world is large, and its millions are segregated by many tongues, and by local prejudices of one kind and another, and by diverse political notions and customs—natural and artificial divisions, which, it is probable, will always work ecclesiastical separations, rendering the parts independent organisms, one only in a higher unity; but so one as to work in perfect harmony and good fellowship.

There is scarcely a probability that there will ever cease to be several influential sects in the same country, represented in the larger communities, towns, and cities. It is even doubtful whether it is desirable. Mutual recognition and brotherly love, avoidance of unnecessary interference, mutual helpfulness, hearty co-working, are desirable; but perhaps we shall each be improved, be more and better than we would be, by the presence of the other.

To be Christian at all the ruling thought and purpose must be to do right and be right. That is the very essence of a Christian spirit. It cannot be surrendered without apostasy. It may be possible in regard to some things to agree to disagree and yet live in peace without separation. If it be a small matter which requires no sacrifice of principle, no personal participation in what is conceived to be a mistake or actual wrong, actual separation may not be required—simple protest may suffice, or silence; but if it be viewed as a serious wrong, and if remaining

in the fellowship of the wrong-doer makes one a participant of it and responsible for it, or convicts him in his own conscience that he does so become, he must withdraw ; and if there be a multitude of that way of thinking, and if they flow together and form a fellowship of sympathy and co-working along the lines of their own convictions of what is right, and what ought to be, who can accuse them of sin ? What, under the circumstances, ought they to do ?

Out of these inevitable causes of human limitations and frailties the great sects have arisen on justifiable grounds. They do not necessarily work the sundering or needless distraction of the body of Christ. They may, on the contrary, by separation preserve the higher unity of spirit, and work together in perfect harmony to the common end of spreading the kingdom of God ; and possibly by the separation, unconsciously, they may effect a good of purification which never could be attained without it. There is reason to believe that this is so. That truth is thereby advanced there can be no question.

The larger sects, which perhaps alone have sufficient grounds for real organic disconnection, have become vast bodies, measured over large extents, approximating equality of influence and active agency. They have each accumulated immense powers for good, vast educational and ecclesiastical foundations—churches, schools, publishing-furnishings, missionary appliances, houses and arrangements for the help of the poor and unfortunate, and all other benevolences which grow out of Christian life and effort ; they have their own methods, and understand how to work their own machinery so as to bring the largest results of usefulness ; by use and training they work with the least possible friction and the greatest attainable harmony. In the case of any individual discontent the transfer is made easy from one fold into another, without serious inconvenience in the

case of the lay communicant, and where conviction requires it in the case of the clergy. Surely enforced conformity would be a poor and dangerous exchange for this state of facts. Let the sects exist in mutual fraternal recognition. Let them emulate each other in all good works. Let each be zealous to make its agency most efficient; no harm can come of it, but much good, if the unity of the spirit be preserved. To this end it is not necessary to make any compromises or surrenders in matters of conviction and conscience; but it is both useful and necessary that the pulpit and the press of each sect, while earnestly maintaining its own institutions and peculiar doctrines, with whatever of zeal is required, should deal fairly and generously with its sister sects; should preach and teach not only charity but joy and reciprocity in the common welfare of all.

There is reason among these sects for continued contention on points of doctrine, but not such as to justify unbrotherliness. These differences are diminishing, and will be sure to grow less, for truth is one, and every advance is in the direction of unity. Meantime let brotherly love continue. The spirit to be cultivated by the sects is one of patience and forbearance. The end after which we are all reaching is not yet reached. The Andover controversy and the revision contest are healthful symptoms, and ought not to cause alarm. The goal is afar, and the ages are before us. Only let love reign, and our differences will grow less and yet less, and some day, each losing something, all will gain every thing.



## REASONS FOR CONSOLIDATION OF SECTS.

BUT while we contend that there are real reasons for the existence of all the principal sects, or have been, sufficient to justify their existence, we now affirm that real reasons may arise when sects which were justifiable in their origin may no longer be justified in their separate existence, and when as real reasons exist for their reunion, or fusion, if they never were united, as once existed for their separation; and when such reasons arise their continuance is an evil of great magnitude, and may be a most culpable sin. This is especially true of the minor divisions among bodies of a common creed and substantially common ecclesiasticism. The causes which lead to such divisions are often uncontrollable at the time, and seem to preclude any other outcome but separation. The causes are often not radical or fundamental, but local and temporary accidents. When time has changed the conditions, if the schism was of a small fraction, it should at the earliest possible time, if it have not the promise of usefulness, return to the parent stock, and should be made welcome and not be subjected to humiliations. If the severance was of large fractions, and the causes have been removed by time, it becomes the duty of the separate parts to harmonize their differences on terms equally honorable to both, and especially where evils growing out of the continued severance are great and cannot be cured except by removing the cause. These are principles of common sense and Christian utility which must be patent to all.

The reason for consolidation when of such a nature as to involve conscience, that is, such as to demand reunion on the ground of its rightness, becomes no less but really more bind-

ing than when it demanded severancy, inasmuch as union is more certainly desirable than disunion. The demand of conscience arising from clear facts should not be weakened by pleas of inexpediency. It can never be expedient to violate conscience or expedient to disobey it. It cannot be a matter of conscience to remain apart when the reasons which required separation do not any longer exist.

## REASONS FOR EXISTENCE OF MORE THAN ONE SECT OR CHURCH ORGANIZATION IN ANY GIVEN COMMUNITY.

THERE is yet one point more of considerable importance which should have a brief attention before we take up the main subject. If, as we have seen, the Church is a higher unity, aggregated of fractional sects, and if there are real and sufficient reasons for this, and if there may come reasons for the reunion of sundered parts, then arises this question—and it is one of great practical moment—“Is there ever need that each sect should exist as a separate organism in every community?” Or may this be a point optional and voluntary to be determined by expediency?

The convictions which make sects are not optional or mere matters of will. They cannot be renounced on mere volition. Must they always assert themselves in every community irrespective of circumstances? That is, is there a justifiable reason that each sect should attempt to maintain its life in every place, or may there be good and sufficient reasons why it should not?

There is a wide difference between a sectary and a bigot, though they are often classed as one and the same. The distinction is one which should be observed. A bigot is one who is obstinately and blindly attached to an opinion or to a religious tenet or ritual, and who is so narrow as to be uncharitable to any who may differ from him. It betokens ignorance and an unchristian temper of mind, and deserves only reprobation. A sectarian is simply a member of a sect holding certain beliefs. He need not be narrow or uncharitable even when intense. His intensity may be the result of most enlightened reflection, and yet broad enough to allow that others possibly

may have as good or even better reasons for their beliefs; he, while loyal to his own convictions, is charitable to those who differ from him. He may be earnest without being obstinate, or without the indulgence of improper feeling. A proper feeling of zeal for what one believes to be right is commendable and right, and is consonant with the highest qualities of mind and heart. It is no reproach to a man to be a sectarian. It is proof of an ignoble, narrow, and ignorant nature to be a bigot.

It is not necessary that every town should have a Methodist, a Presbyterian, an Episcopal, a Congregational, and a Lutheran church, and every other church, in it. Not even if there should be some who would become members of each one of these communions, or who have strong preferences for any one of them, or who are so little Christian that they could not worship with any other branch than the one preferred, does this constitute a reason why that branch should exist there. It may be a good church, and yet there may be good reasons why it should not exist in a given place—why to attempt to plant it would be ill-advised, and possibly really sinful. There may be abundant reasons why one and only one of these churches would be better than two, or two better than one; or there may be room for all and a justifiable reason for all. It is a case which good common sense and Christian prudence must decide. These churches, whatever their differences, unless mad with judicial blindness or bigotry, recognize each other as holding the essentials of faith and as real parts of the Church of God. Nor does the fact that any one of these churches may have something of good in its doctrines or usages which others existing in the place have not make an adequate reason why it should exist there. If it would occasion evils of various kinds, overbalancing every good it would probably do, then it is better it should not be there. Many a hamlet is cursed by a plethora

of churches, and it is a safe rule, where the demand for any given church in a place not able to support two or more churches of variant creeds is merely one of narrow sectarianism, to encourage the community to be content with one and to fuse their differences in building up one rather than two or more. It is easy for purblind zeal for a sect rather than zeal for Christ to object, but it does not change the fact.

If the community is small or the neighborhood sparse and remote from any church, and is likely to remain so, it is desirable there should be one church with sanctuary and Sabbath privileges, and that there should be a faithful pastor. Only the undevout and careless of moralities and religion will doubt this. Each church, zealous for its own doctrine and growth of power, might desire to be the one chosen, but it will not pretend that it is essential or absolutely important, or so important that if another is there it should push itself in, even though it should create strife and work harm. The case, then, is one which must be determined by prudential considerations. Now, what are the considerations that ought to have weight with either common sense or Christian conscience? Surely not because A., B., or C. would be pleased to have his church in the place; not simply to have two or more churches; not because it would spite some neighbor; not simply for sect aggrandizement—none of these things. In determining the question there are things to be considered. The existence of a church will cost money. Money for the edifice, money for a pastor, money for all its operations. Money is a trust. Will it pay? Ought the people so to be burdened? Will the divided resources keep two parsonages in comfort? Will it not beget complaining and hardships and strife, and turn many away from rather than to the house of God? These are not unimportant considerations. But we want our shibboleth; yes, but can we afford it at such a price? An-

other phase of the question comes into view when drafts are made on missionary funds to maintain these competing altars. Are cases of this kind so rare as not to deserve mention? If hundreds of places and hundreds of oppressed peoples and suffering pastors could speak, what suppose you would be the answer?

What, then, are the conditions which ought to be determinative of the propriety of establishing a given Church in any community, and a second, third, tenth, or any number of places of worship, of one or all the denominations?

To this we answer, first, an absolute cause for one Church is, where no evangelical Church exists in the place or at convenient distance, or when any Church that may exist utterly fails to provide for the spiritual wants of the people. When such a case is found, if the people do not themselves make overtures, it becomes the duty of some evangelical Church to occupy the ground as missionary territory. It is the right of the people to have the Gospel, and it is the duty of some branch of the evangelical Church to occupy the field. What branch should take the initiative, if the place is only sufficient for one congregation and pastorate, must depend on circumstances. When the authorities of some one branch have taken possession and have signs of favor and success, as a rule they should not be obstructed by interference of some other denomination, but should be encouraged, and, if need be, be helped by all. If, however, the place is growing and has promise of needing the services of more than one pastor and Church, circumstances may determine that it would be wise and Christian for others to enter, not as rivals and competitors, but as co-workers. The circumstances that would call for the multiplication of places of worship of diverse creeds are ability to support, sufficiency of population in immediate prospect, and demands arising among the people themselves for the presence among

them of churches whose doctrines and methods suit a number of the community, or the existence in the community of a large unchurched population which might be reached and helped by new and somewhat different appliances.

Where there is sufficient population and sufficient ability to support there is a need which, if not supplied, weakens the existing Church, and which, when supplied, renders each congregation stronger and more flourishing than either would be alone; and this rule holds where the conditions exist for any number necessary to meet the demand. Healthy emulation and loving co-operation quicken each Church to its best efforts, and the harvest responds to the labor. The larger the fallow the weaker the aggressive force of the Church cultivating the field. Due proportion engenders zeal and develops strength and makes growth. An overstock of machinery maintained at oppressive and unremunerative expense tends to unhealthy motives and to misuse. Excess is expensive and burdensome, and some part, or all parts, suffer. These are lessons which Churches are slow to learn, but which they greatly need to learn. Christian emulation is tonicful. More and better work is done under observation and comparison, and especially when self-preservation is in the scale, if the struggle be not too great.

Before a new church enterprise is started in any place where an efficient Church already exists, whether of a doctrinal creed differing from the Church existing or of the same creed, the matter ought to have serious consideration, and should be determined on some one of the above grounds. If projected in strife, or mere sect pride, or selfish gratification of a few unreasoning persons, whatever of seeming good it may do, in the end it is probable the evil will overbalance the good.

If some self-denial is required it is wiser and better that it should be exercised, and that the spirit of charity and brotherly

love should be cultivated, even at the expense of having our children brought up under another faith and usages which an individual family or a few families do not prefer. No evangelical Church has such pre-eminence over any other as to make an absolute demand for its existence in a place where it must tear down in order to build up, or where, to maintain itself, it must excite animosities and keep alive the spirit of opposition and contention. In any such case both the spirit and measures are likely to be so unchristian as to be disastrous to the piety of both parties, and in the end disastrous to the cause itself. It is the very thing condemned in 1 Cor. i, 10-18. It engenders hate and doubt among unbelievers themselves, and without doubt destroys many souls.

The case becomes much stronger when carried on by the expenditure of missionary funds. If people will spend their own money for the gratification of mere sectarian feeling to the injury of religion, their own and others', the sin is gross enough; or, if not the sin, the motive being good, but the judgment only at fault, the mistake; but the appropriation of funds gathered by appeals to the Christian benevolence of other people, who abhor strife, to the mere propagandism of strife, becomes a more heinous offense, and doubly so when these funds are in demand in a thousand needy places.

Sect life is to be preserved only when it is a demand for the best development of a community, and when it efficiently ministers to the upbuilding of the kingdom, never to be sought merely for the aggrandizement of the sect or for the promotion of mere partisan aims. One Church where only one is needed is a golden motto; more than one, only where growing and prospective population creates a real demand; co-operation and real fusion, merging all differences, where there is room but for one; loving emulation and generous fellowship, where



needs create the demand for two or ten; any number, as the case may be. These rules observed, sect life is the best blood of church life. The Church one, the branches many or few, as the best conscience determines, unity in multiplicity, and multiplicity in unity.

If these positions be true—and we believe they are true—then the Church of God, while one in its deepest essence, may exist in many branches without external organic connection. There is no absolute reason why the Church should have or aim at such unity—why she should not exist as sects. It may be for the best that it should be so divided.

One branch may, on account of language, be German, one French, one English, and so throughout the nationalities because of convenience. One may be Presbyterian, one Baptist, one Lutheran, one Methodist, one Episcopalian, because of even minor differences of creed or ecclesiasticism. Other causes may exist to lead to similar separation. It may be for the greatest good that it should be so. It may also be for the greatest good that in a given community only one of these sects should be planted.

## THE FOREGOING PRINCIPLES APPLIED TO THE UNION OF METHODISMS.

I WISH now, in the light of these principles, and in the light of existing facts, to consider the sects of Methodism, for Methodism has become a cluster of sects, whether to her credit or not, but with special reference to the two great divisions—the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Before the special subject is introduced, however, I ask attention to some suggestions with respect to all the various branches of American Methodism.

The sects of Methodism all embrace one system of doctrine, differing hardly at all in the expression of any article of the common creed. So far as doctrine is concerned they may be said to be substantially and as nearly as possible in perfect agreement; with one slight exception they are Arminian in theology. This marks the line of their separation from all the branches of the Calvinistic and Calvino-Augustinian branches of the Christian family, and is such a ground of difference as to make organic union with such Churches impossible, and is, therefore, never mooted. Radical differences between them and the Arian and Pelagian family render it impossible that Methodism should fuse with them. On other but equally fundamental grounds, they are compelled to remain separate from their Lutheran and Baptist brethren. Their doctrinal disagreement with the Protestant Episcopal Church is slight, and not sufficient, alone considered, to prevent a possible union. The subject has been several times slightly agitated, but the differences in other respects are so great as scarcely to permit the hope that union can ever be effected—at least there is nothing in sight to encourage the expectation of

that consummation in the near future. Meantime, with respect to all these communions, all Methodisms cultivate cordial relations, regarding the grounds of difference, however sufficient to prevent fusion, insufficient to preclude loving fellowship and sincere co-operation in all Christian work.

The Methodists divide among themselves into two classes—Episcopal and non-Episcopal. This, together with the question of lay representation, was the first and has been the chief ground of division into separate sects or families, if all Methodists should be classed as one sect.

Our English brethren and all the Churches of their planting have been strenuously non-Episcopal and remain so, both at home and where they have taken root in other countries. Early, indeed, in its first organic existence, American Methodism assumed the Episcopal form of ecclesiasticism, but with a modified view of Episcopacy, and not with perfect content. Since 1828 there have been two Methodisms—Episcopal and non-Episcopal. Each division has on various grounds flowered out into several branches. We have Episcopal, non-Episcopal, Congregational, and Independent Methodists, some twenty-six divisions in all. The non-Episcopal branches in our country have not greatly flourished, but are not without vigor of life, though obscure and local and almost unknown. Of course, organic union of these minor branches with the larger and more flourishing Episcopal branches cannot be effected except on the surrender of their ground of separation, which is hardly to be expected; hence they are not in view in this writing, though were it possible for them to come to us they would be hailed with warm welcome. Possibly these minor branches could, if they cannot unite with us, wisely consolidate and increase their power for usefulness. This has already taken place in the provinces, where the united branches are now powerful and greatly benefited by

the union. The Episcopal branch has divided into five distinct Episcopal Methodisms, the Methodist Episcopal Church being the original stock ; the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church of America. The first named, and first in order of existence, includes whites and blacks ; the second is almost exclusively white ; the third, fourth, and fifth are exclusively colored.

Recently measures are being taken to unite the three colored branches into one, with promise of success. This is a consummation devoutly to be wished on their own account and in the general interests of their race. It, if it might occur, would partly do away with an evil of great magnitude among them, the evil of several Churches of the same name and faith in communities not able to support one, and the meaningless and damaging strifes which always spring out of such conditions—an evil which has no compensating good. The magnitude of the evil can only be proximately conceived of by an acquaintance with the facts. It is no uncommon thing to find a little hamlet of a hundred or less colored people with not less than three starving little churches, one Baptist and two, sometimes three, different sects of Methodists, each seeking to establish itself by pulling down the other, and neither scarcely knowing any other ground of difference than the names by which they are called, the strife not unfrequently maintained with a fury proportioned to the ignorance which foment it.

The union of these bodies would make of three weak bodies one really strong and influential Church of nearly a million communicants, and would, by enabling them to concentrate their forces, improve all the conditions for useful and successful Christian work—rescuing means which are now wasted in strife for advance and improvement in all lines.

It is just to say that these three Episcopal branches largely support themselves, receiving almost nothing from either the Methodist Episcopal Church or the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, or any other of the sects. Their success, depending so almost entirely on themselves, in founding schools and building churches, and in rearing a respectable membership and a ministry many of whom rank high in ability, and in conducting all their affairs, is proof of their ability, when united, to make a well-ordered branch of the Christian Church. When duly considered in connection with the result in our branch of the colored work, on which we have spent many millions, it gives rise to the doubt whether our well-meant methods have been on the whole always supremely wise.

The question emerges at this point, What should be the relations of the white Methodisms to the colored Methodisms? and along with it, What should be the relations of the colored members of our Methodism to the united colored Episcopal Methodism? It is a delicate subject, and one which can scarcely be discussed without undue passion, especially among some of our white brethren; and yet it is a subject which must be discussed at the risk of being misunderstood and maligned.

We begin with the first division of the question, What should be the relations of the white Episcopal Methodisms to the united colored Episcopal Methodism if it should come to be an actualized fact? Would it be practicable and a thing to be desired to bring them into organic unity with us, or if not that to secure such federative relations as would make available to them the friendship and help of the stronger brotherhood? At present no helpful relations exist. Is it the outcome of the wisest Christian statesmanship that this state of things should continue?

There are here two questions which must be considered separately. To the first, Is organic unity between the two bodies practicable, or, if practicable, is it desirable? it must be obvious to any reflecting person that a categorical yes or no is not the answer that should be returned. It can only be answered in the light of another question, What would be for the greatest good? Only that can be desirable, or the thing which of right ought to be, which will work to the greatest good, and will be attended with the least possible evil, when there is no absolute principle which determines the answer.

This is a case of that kind. There is no absolute determining principle. The bodies may remain separate without sin, unless it can be shown clearly that their organic union would be promotive of the greatest good. That, then, is the point to be considered. The answer will demand candor and wisdom. Environments must be taken into the account. If the continued separation only arises from pride or prejudice or any unchristian feeling, that determines that it is a sin. If it may be for the reason that organic unity, all things considered, would not be for the best, then it may not only not be a sin to remain separate, but it would be a wrong to effect union if it were possible.

We desire to present two views, either of which, it seems to us, might be a practical solution of the difficult problem, or, if not that, may lead to something better than either.

The first view we present is that the two bodies should remain separate under existing facts, or that, whatever may be wise for the future, the time has not come for organic unity, if it shall ever come. The reasons we allege in support of this view are the following:

First, negatively; and we give emphasis to this, not be-

cause of mere race distinction, or because one of the parties is not equal in the kingdom of God to the other, and therefore should not be associated with them in the same Church. This is never the ground for the existence of separate sects. In this case it has no more place than in any other.

We proceed on the theory of a union of all the colored Episcopal Methodisms in one great organism. This we believe advisable and imperative on the ground that there is no good reason, no insurmountable reason, of doctrine or economy to prevent it, but more especially on the ground that strife and friction are inevitable without it. This we know to be a fact, and in the nature of things it cannot be avoided. Each division, while they remain apart, will feel called upon to push its occupancy of every hamlet where it can gain a foothold. The outcome will be as it has been, two, three, or four little factions, each seeking to tear the other down that it may build itself up. The result must be loss of piety to the contestants and weakness and impoverishment to all. Union would minister peace and strength. The dissevered parts coming together would make a Church of power for good, would give respectability, and would, by union of support, develop harmony and economy of means which would improve all operations of the body. The effect could not be other than healthful.

The only remaining friction would arise from our Methodism. This would be healed by merging our members, lay and clerical, into the great united body if they were favorable thereto. There would then be no waste of energy in friction; all reason for strife would at once cease. Ephraim would not envy Judah, and Judah would cease to vex Ephraim. This we believe ought to be done, and done as speedily as possible if something better cannot be done.

The reasons for this latter position we now proceed to men-

tion, and also to indicate the method by which it can be brought about in a way equally honorable and most beneficent to all.

So long as our colored brethren remain with us the elements of strife with the other colored Methodisms remain ; and, should they unite, remain not only with unabated but with increasing force and augmented fury. The two must continue to strive side by side. Is it right ? If so, what is the sufficient reason ? Is it wise for us to appropriate money to perpetuate this unseen and harmful warfare ? Is there not a better way ?

This is one side of the evil. There is another which is rapidly coming into view which may prove to be even more disastrous. We do well to be forewarned. These members of ours, for reasons which will grow in force, do not remain with us without working evils to us that may become disturbing and disastrous, which would be averted if they should unite with their colored brothers, and this not by fault of either party. May these evils be averted ? and if so, ought they so to be ?

I name two of them. We have bestowed vast amounts of money on these our dependent brethren. There was good reason for it. The help was needful, and has produced good fruits. But may we not, nevertheless, have produced an evil by our largesses which in the future may work damagingly to those whom we aim to help, by creating a feeling of dependence which will mar instead of promoting their manhood ? Will the longer continuance of the same policy develop the best type of Christians ? When we look at the branches which have grown without us we confess to a doubt. The result is not entirely satisfactory. We have built churches, founded schools, rendered invaluable help in many ways, but may it not be that it would be better now, with this setting up, that these children of ours should be allowed to care for themselves ?



Might not a better type of manhood come to them than will if they are kept longer in leading-strings? Let the question be studied in the light of what has come to those Churches who have learned to walk alone. The comparison is full of suggestions, and it will not do to judge it by partial representations which are often misrepresentations.

Then there is yet another aspect of this subject that wise forethought will need to consider, and it should be pondered with care; it is this: these brothers of ours, while subsisting on our bounties, will not be content to take inferior rank. This is a delicate subject, but wise statesmanship demands that it should be handled. It cannot be repressed. Some of these brothers are equals in talent with their white brothers. They are not slow to discover that. It would not be strange if they are prompt to assert it. They do now declare it, and who shall say nay?

Out of this gratifying fact,—for it is a gratifying fact—it shows that we have not wrought in vain; that our “brother in black,” with opportunity, may be equal to his white brothers, and that some of the former will surpass many of the latter. But out of this comes another fact; it is here: these brothers demand recognition. They ask and claim it with persistence, that they shall not be discriminated against in the high offices of the Church. It is attempted to pacify them with the assurance that when they shall develop men who will be qualified to fill these positions their claim will be recognized and they will be elected to the coveted places. Is this a wise or fair putting of the case? It is implied that want of the qualified man is the only impediment in the way. Do we not know that this is not true? Why, then, shall we be insincere? Who among us believes that a colored man could be elected general superintendent, for instance, if a man every way qualified to fill that office could be found? Nay, I will put it yet stronger—if a man better qualified than any of

his competitors could be found, who believes that it would be a wise thing to do? Who believes that it would tend to the greatest peace and welfare of the Church? The same is true of other high offices. Why, then, shall we not recognize the fact as a thing impracticable and not to be thought of? Who does not know that the obliteration of the color line is not within our power? There are now white Conferences and there are colored Conferences, white Churches and colored Churches, white pastors for white Churches and colored pastors for colored Churches. It is beyond our power to make it otherwise, and it will remain so. The attempt to change it would only breed confusion, distraction, strife, self-destruction. We know that this is so unavoidably. Nor is it because we are not Christian. It is in the force of environments, or, deeper still, in the nature of things.

Growing out of these insurmountable facts might it not be wiser and better that our colored brethren should become connected with an organization which would oppose none of these impediments to their highest advancement? Let any one without prejudice calmly look at all the facts, and can he doubt that the way to the greatest good with the least attendant evil may lie in the direction of separation and a possible organic union of the colored people into one great Methodism if it can be peaceably effected?

That being effected, not only would the way open to them to their best development, but the way would open to their white brethren to a genuine and undisturbing fraternity, and to modes of helpfulness which cannot exist while things remain as they are. Would it be a wrong to the colored people? In what way? What right of theirs would be infracted? What injury would they suffer? On the other hand, would it not improve their condition and open up to them a better future? Of course,

a union of these bodies among themselves would require wisdom and honorable dealing with all the parties in the interest.

One no inconsiderable effect in the interest of the race problem might ensue. Wholly disconnected from entanglements with a portion of whites, who are mainly in the North, out of which entanglements come sectional strifes, they might find sympathy and friendship with their immediate neighbors, and public welfare might thus be promoted and sectional feeling allayed.

Among us an evil of no small magnitude, exciting scandal and threatening much mischief and denominational disgrace, would cease: I name it with mortification the alleged fact; and possibly not without foundation of using these innocent suffragists for personal promotion. Who has not heard and reddened with shame at the intimation of the bare possibility? however groundless the allegation and slanderous the charge.

Might it not be better for all if an adjustment could be made that would separate the races in such way as to prevent the evils which come from the imperfect union which exists, and which would unite them upon a higher and truer plane of union which could work no evil to either?

Free the subject from all other considerations than the simple question, What would be for the best good of all the interests involved—the good of our colored brethren, the good of our white brethren, the good of general welfare, the good of God's glory?—it seems to me that it ought to be possible to wise men, with guaranteed divine help, to make such adjustments as will secure these ends in greater measure than at present exists, and, whether or not, it is certainly Christian to make the effort.

A *sine qua non* is that the aim be simple, and that the effort be prosecuted with sole reference to it. Prejudice and passion and all taint of selfishness must be allowed no place. Lifted out of these turbid elements into the serene heights of an

absolute and supreme desire to secure the greatest glory of God and the best good of man, now and for the ages, despite the difficulties of the problem its solution will be wrought out.

What the relations of these bodies should be if separated into distinct organisms will be not a difficult problem. It will resolve itself into the simple question, How shall the stronger help the weaker? A question of method. If the spirit be right it will not fail to find the right method.

Interdenominational comity among sects which differ in creed and methods of church life demands only mutual love and non-interference. The same would be true in this case to a large degree, except that, as co-denominations of the same faith and general economy, separated only on race lines, an adjustment should be made securing sympathy and help from the stronger to the weaker, in manners and ways agreed upon by members of the same family.

There are, it may be, those among us who will insist that there are no such impediments as here assumed to organic union between us and colored Methodism; that, in fact, there is no good reason for the separation; that unchristian prejudice alone makes the demand. Is this true? Take the question already supposed, Is it practicable to have a colored general superintendent to preside over white Conferences, as a condition of the union with Episcopal colored Methodism? We unhesitatingly affirm that the thing is impracticable, not on the ground of prejudice, but on the ground of Christian prudence—that the attempt to do it would be suicidal. One immediate effect would be a disruption of the Church. There is not a white Conference in which it would not breed dissatisfaction, tumult, rebellion. The only way to avert this would be to restrict the administration of the colored bishop to colored Conferences. To effect this a new law would have to be made which would

require a change of the restrictive rule by the process under which alone that change can be made, since it would be an infraction of the general superintendency guaranteed and required to be preserved by the restriction and thus placed out of the power of the General Conference.

There is probably a small fraction in the ministry who may be ready for the measure and a few in the laity, but the number cannot be considerable. The agitation itself could do nothing but harm, and the accomplished fact would be the saddest fact in our church life, and one of the most calamitous events that could befall Christianity itself in the strifes which would inevitably follow. In view of these facts organic unity with the colored Episcopal Methodisms is a question not even to be mooted, and in fact is not mooted; and for the same reason the election of a colored bishop from among our own colored constituents is a thing not to be regarded as among near or remote possibilities unless the union can be effected on a plan which separates the two parts in some such way as at present exists.

It is fair that this should be understood by our colored brethren, so that they can determine intelligently whether it is best for them to remain in connection with us, or better to associate themselves with a Church which offers no such impediments to their just and legitimate aspirations. It cannot be right or Christian that, for any reason, they should be beguiled with false hopes or implied promises which cannot be fulfilled, or even be attempted to fulfill, without serious evils to the Church. If, with a full understanding of the case, they prefer to remain with us in peace as they are, abandoning the expectation of the preferments which they desire and for which they are indicating a perfectly legitimate disposition to contend, the Church will continue to regard them as brothers beloved and administer for and over them in every respect as she does for

all her children. If in view of the embarrassments to their advancement which arise, not from prejudice, but from providential causes beyond her control, they should choose to associate themselves with brethren where no such providential impediments exist, then it would be for the Church to make such arrangements as would be helpful to their welfare in their new relations.

If we abandon the idea of organic unity with colored Episcopal Methodisms as impracticable the question of, What relations shall the two bodies sustain to each other? remains; and should our colored brethren choose to unite with them, the question remains, What would be our duty to them when they separate from us? Manifestly these are two different and important questions, and upon them we venture some suggestions.

The relations which might exist between us and our sister-Church, if in any respect different from the mere comity and good-will which exists between all denominations of Christians, would of course be such as by mutual agreement might be arranged. As Churches of the same genesis, name, and creed they should be those of close friendship and good fellowship, and, if agreeable to the weaker body, those of special helpfulness in every way possible that might be agreed upon. That is what the Christian spirit would require. With respect to those of our own constituents who should feel called upon to go into the union the separation from us should be in mutual good-will and cordial friendship, as resulting from providential causes which make the separation one for the best good of all. It should be secured that their union should be on terms of honorable recognition and equality with all the other contracting parties. The properties which they have acquired through us for church and educational purposes should go with them as their dower. A proper proportion of them should be guaranteed

positions of rank with those of the other Churches. They should not go from us poor, but, as compared with their state when we came to their help, they should carry with them more wealth of equipment than any of those with whom they become united. These are matters which it ought not to be difficult to arrange.

The separation, we well understand, could not be effected without pain and sorrow. A union cemented by mutual sympathies and sufferings is not easily dissolved. No reason short of the greatest good should be deemed sufficient to warrant the sacrifice. But if the time has come when the greatest good demands it, then it ought to be effected, and it should be the aim of all to bring it about in a manner the least distressing possible, and the most creditable possible to the intelligence and piety of all concerned. If there will necessarily be evils of pain attending it, it becomes us to set over against these the evils which we foresee will be sure to ensue if it do not take place. Let the subject have fair and Christian consideration, and let that course be adopted which seems wisest and best, and whatever the outcome may be we will be saved the guilt of incurring evils that might have been, if not wholly avoided, at least lessened.

Still, it is asked on what ground, if not mere prejudice, can we insist on the wisdom of union between the two white Methodisms, and of separation between the white and colored Methodisms. We answer, that precisely the same reasons may exist for both positions: the greatest good and the abatement of serious evils. Union in the one case might secure the greatest good. Separation, in the other case, might secure the greatest good. It is not a case of prejudice in the slightest degree; but, one and simple, it is that the greatest good and the avoidance of manifold evils demand it. If this is so—and we have pointed out the

proofs that it is so—then the reasons for separation might be absolute and sufficient, and a wrong might be done in the attempt to embarrass the proposed action by alleging prejudice as its cause. If action on the ground of prejudice is unchristian—and we believe it is—and as such should be condemned by all, it is no less unchristian to ascribe proposed action to prejudice when the sufficient reason is found for it in the mere consideration of the greatest good. Hindrance to the greatest good by an appeal to prejudice is as much a wrong as any other wrong done by the mere prompting of prejudice, and a much greater wrong when the highest interests are put in peril thereby, and especially when the party against whom the alleged prejudice exists is made to suffer the injury. If the greatest good of the colored race would be promoted by the proposed change, and if manifold evils now existing would thereby be remedied, and more especially yet if prospective evils of a serious kind to those who have constantly proved themselves to be their friends would thereby be averted, the proposed change ought to be made, not simply on the ground of expediency, but on the highest ground of Christian principle. The only thing involved, and the only thing to be had in view, ought to be, What does the greatest good require? That settled, duty is plain. We are not able to see that any evil would ensue from the separation which cannot be averted by wise adjustment. We do see that much existing and more threatening evil would be averted thereby. We cannot see that any good would be hindered under the separation wisely arranged. We do see that much good would be secured thereby. On this ground alone we advocate the wisdom of the measure if a better cannot be devised.

That their union with us was once a need no one questions. That we have been helpful to them no one questions. That



we are still under obligation to help them no one disputes. It is simply a question, How can we best help them and avoid evils which have grown up and others that are threatening? It is assumed that their union with us is still the only way. We have shown reasons for the doubt. The reasons no one can gainsay. The reasons point out, not that we must forsake them, but that we must adopt methods which changed conditions demand for their help.

It will be insisted that if they part from us and assume an autonomy of their own they will degenerate; that they need us to hold them up and to befriend them against their enemies; that, in fact, we are so their only friends that they cannot be trusted apart from our care. The facts once justified this assumption. They do not any longer support it. They have become able to go alone. They furnish the proof that without us they can develop into as sturdy a manhood as with us. What they want is the friendship of the white race to protect them in their rights, and means to develop their educational institutions, and encouragement in every way to elevate themselves. All this can be secured to them without union with us.

If the union provokes friction among themselves and hostility among their neighbors, and other forms of evil of which there is abundant proof, it is better for them that it should be severed; and on this ground alone it is advocated; no, not on this ground alone, but on this ground and additionally on the ground that it is corrupting to us, as a means of promoting schemes of personal ambition.

I have been thus frank in stating these points that due attention may be given to them. It will give pain; I am sorry for it. It will excite displeasure; this is still a greater grief. We must nevertheless look at the case.

I stated that there were two views in my mind which I wished

to offer; the second view presents a possible practicable scheme of union between the colored and white branches. On the whole I prefer the second.

The two things to keep steadily in view are what is right, which is equivalent to what is best, and what is practicable, and this reduces at last to one thing, since only what is best is practicable to Christian men. The interests involved are those of the Church and those of our colored brethren; none of us would separate them. None would consent to any thing that would compromise either.

If our colored brethren should agree to a union among themselves, thus healing all their difficulties, and if they should desire to become one with us, might it not after all be possible to unite into one still greater Church in which all Episcopal Methodisms should become consolidated?

The perfect ideal of a union without distinction of color we have seen is absolutely impracticable. There are two even with us in the best unity we can attain, and yet we are one. Why not an all-inclusive union and yet the same provisional separation—colored Conferences and white Conferences, colored pastors for colored Churches and white pastors for white Churches, colored bishops for colored Conferences and white bishops for white Conferences; one Church for all?

The only change in the organic law that would be necessary would be a provision so to distribute Episcopal service as that our colored bishops should, as now in the colored Churches, be restricted to the colored Conferences over which they now preside, restricting the services of the white bishops in the same way. The restrictive rule might in the way provided be so altered as to permit this arrangement.

A chief embarrassment would be thus overcome and no wrong done to any. If this might be done all the Churches in the

several Methodisms would become Churches of one Methodism, and would fall in the Conferences in whose bounds they are—the colored into colored Conferences and the white into white Conferences. This would remove all frictions of division in the Churches and consolidate the little starving Churches in the same locality into one.

If this might be it would remain to provide for the General Conference and its work. Might not this be satisfactorily arranged? Why not both colors meet in the same place, at the same time, and constitute one body. If not, why not?

In all the work of the body, except elections, let them deliberate and act together and unite in making laws for the regulation and ordering of the Church, so that precisely the same rules and regulations should be made for all to be governed thereby, and the exact unity of the body be preserved. In the elections let the colored delegates act separately and elect all the officers to be assigned work among themselves, and the white delegates all the officers to do work among them. This would be just and not difficult.

With respect to general societies, missionary, church extension, education, and freedmen, let each be represented, and in the secretaryships, each officer to work and live among his own people.

The Board of Bishops would comprise all the bishops, colored and white having their meeting together, so that all should have the benefit of the review of the work, and the administration thus be preserved in unity and harmony.

This would open all opportunities of advancement and position alike and equally to both sections, and would discriminate against none, and would subject none to just reason of complaint, and it would effectually prevent any, if the temptation were offered, from seeking personal ends by courting the suffrages of any by improper methods, and place none at disadvantage.

If this would insure more helpfulness to our colored brothers, which is the chief thing to be aimed at, it seems to me it might be practicable. The chief embarrassment would arise from the size of the General Conference. Would that be absolutely insurmountable? If the colored Churches should not unite among themselves, and not unite with us, and if our colored members should prefer to remain with us, then why not the plan here proposed be adopted with respect to them?

This arrangement would not completely abolish the color line, which nature has established and which is therefore beyond our control, but it would be an approach to it, and the nearest approach possible, and would leave no just ground of complaint. It would impose no concessions and no discriminations which are unreasonable in view of the interests sought to be secured. It would unite the two races into closer bonds, and it would not infringe upon natural limitations in a manner which would awaken just resistance or needless irritations. While it would provide for the separation of the congregations as an unovercomable necessity it would open the most effectual way for real friendly and brotherly relations. Further than this it is impracticable to go even for so desirable a thing as organic unity.

One of these methods, or something analogous, seems to me to be the most Christian way of meeting the demands upon us. If these suggestions shall not seem feasible, but shall open the way to something better, their aim will be reached. Let us patiently seek what will be for the greatest good and avoid passion, and we will find the way, if not now, then tomorrow.

The adoption of either of these methods would free the united body or the separate bodies from the damaging friction which now exists, and would inflict no unchristian discrimina-

tions. The latter would possibly secure, if it might be deemed practicable, the greatest benefit to those who are in the greatest need. All the benefits of mutual contact would be secured alike, and on precisely the same grounds, to whites and colored.

The General Conference and general committees would remain precisely as they now are, except in the matter of elections, and this slight change would open all the avenues to advancement and promotion in a way that would occasion no resistance or disturbance of any kind. It would place both sections on precisely the same level.

In any event, whatever the settlement of the delicate and difficult problems, it must be done on Christian principle—that of seeking the greatest good as the thing one and simple to be aimed at. On this high plane of principle the Church should act with perfect freedom, in calm, dispassionate judgment, neither beguiled by alluring persuasion nor terrorized by threats. No calamity can come from doing right. No advantage can accrue from doing wrong. Neither overconservatism nor frenzied fanaticism should control the decision. The road to safety lies in neither extremes, but as in every case is the *via media* of practical good sense, making concessions where principle is not involved and where wise and beneficent ends are thereby to be secured. An attempt to attain all that extravagance of desire might demand is the sure way to lose all that conserving good sense would grant. Let us not be alarmed by threats, come from what quarter they may, white or colored, but, aiming at the right, go forward in the fear of the Lord. All will not be pleased whatever may be done, but, doing right, God will be pleased, and all whose opinions or feelings are worth considering will acquiesce.

## REASONS FOR ORGANIC UNION BETWEEN THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH.

I COME now to consider the subject of organic union between the two great branches of Episcopal Methodism, the Methodist Episcopal and the Methodist Episcopal, South, Churches. The discussion will formulate itself about the question, Ought these two Methodisms become organically one? It will be my effort to show reasons why they should so become.

Before assigning these reasons it will be proper and helpful to delay a moment upon these three points: (*a*) the reason for discussing the question now or at all; (*b*) things which should be excluded from the discussion, and (*c*) the spirit which should characterize the treatment of the question.

On the first of these points we affirm that the question demands discussion for the reason that the present relations of these bodies is not satisfactory, and for the further reason that the question of re-adjustment is mooted and will not quiet without suitable consideration. There are thousands, many of whom are among the wisest and best people in and out of the two Churches, who believe that their separation is a real evil of great magnitude. The reasons for this belief should be expressed and considered. If they are real the evil should be remedied; if they are delusions that ought to be shown. Many things already spoken and written demonstrate the importance of discussion.

On the second point, things which should be excluded from the discussion, we have this to say in general: Every thing should be excluded which is not essential to the right consideration of the single question, Ought the organic union take place? All

needless irritations which tend to separation rather than union should be excluded. The question is, What is duty now? The separation took place forty-eight years ago. Nearly half a century has elapsed since the occurrence. All the actors have passed away from the earth. Almost the entire Church then living are now dead. The occasion of the separation no longer exists. The event was universally regretted at the time as a calamity which it was impossible to aver. For the half century the two Churches have existed as distinct bodies, at first with much friction and angry contention, and, doubtless, provocations on each side. In recent years there has been a growing feeling of fraternity and questioning whether the separation should longer continue. That is the position now.

Is there any reason in considering that question for opening old wounds? We confess to the feeling that there is not. Why stir the smoldering embers? Why recite a sad story of events which occurred before we were born and which belong to a by-gone age? Is it necessary? Is it wise? What demand is there for it? What good can come of it? Is there any grievance to be remedied by it? Will the recital put us in better temper for the solution of present duty? It seems to me that its only tendency will be to obstruct and work discord and renew alienations which are now vanishing away. Our fathers were honest, brave, true men. They could not agree. Shall we be more likely to agree? If not, why renew a strife the occasions of which no longer exist.

The simple question with us is, What is duty now? That is a question, and it is a question which as Christian men we are compelled to ask. It is a question of duty which may not be pushed aside by mere volition. We stand to-day in the presence of the facts of to-day; we are great Christian bodies existing in separation. The simple question is, Is it right, considering all

the attendant circumstances, that we should now and longer so exist? Our fathers may have made mistakes, may have fallen into improper tempers, may have used improper words and done improper things. Considering the history, and taking into account human frailties, it was perhaps impossible that it should have been otherwise. They are now beyond our power to remedy. Is it wise to indulge in recriminations or recitals that confuse and anger us? or may we let the dead sleep?

With respect to the spirit or temper in which the question should be considered I can only say what all of us must feel it should be, one of calm, sincere conscientiousness, free from all passion, as under the immediate inspection of God. The interests involved are sacred and great, reaching forward through the ages. There is room for difference of judgment. There will be opportunity for bitterness along with dissent. An unwise or unkind word or allusion will create irritation. It is to be hoped that we are Christian enough to avoid with studious care every thing of the kind.

Possibly it may be impracticable after the most sincere effort to reach an immediate adjustment. The effort to find what duty is, conducted with the right spirit, will in any event promote our personal self-respect and commend us to the whole brotherhood of Christianity, and cannot fail to meet the approval of God. If we succeed the ages will bless us; if we fail we will be free from guilt.

In this temper, believing that the consideration of the subject is an urgent demand of the hour, and omitting all reference to the past, I purpose, in the fear of God, and with sincere desire to help to peace and the greatest good, to set forth reasons for the reunion of the severed branches. Whatever else shall characterize the writing, I am determined there shall be no bitterness in it, and am sure that its aim is simple and pure. I



indulge the hope that if any parties interested in the matter discussed should deem what is written of sufficient importance to demand the attention of a notice they will come to the discussion in the same spirit. We may differ in view—this is inevitable; need we differ in spirit? If we shall be able to preserve the temper of love and simplicity of aim comparison of views may enable us to reach conclusions which, on the whole, though requiring some surrenders made possible by the mutual service we shall be able to render each other, will be satisfactory to all, or, if not that, an improvement on the present.

To the question, What is the duty of the hour with respect to the organic unity of the two bodies? there are three possible views: first, that organic unity is impracticable, and therefore they should remain as they are; second, that some adjustment other than that which at present exists should be sought, but not organic unity; third, that the two bodies should unite and become one.

These three views are held with equal honesty and pertinacity by large numbers for each, both among the ministers and laymen in each body. The difference cannot be ascribed to mere prejudice or passion or volition. There are sufficiently strong reasons for each view to allow of purity of conviction in each case, and yet only one of the views can be correct. Which is correct cannot be determined by vote or pertinacity merely, but must be by the stronger reasons discoverable by intelligent comparisons. Thus all great questions are settled and differences are overcome.

1. In favor of remaining as we are it is alleged that both branches have greatly prospered since the separation, and especially more recently. The allegation is unquestionably true, and were there no other facts to be considered it would consti-

tute a strong ground for continued severance; but other facts must be taken into the account. These will appear when we come to state the reasons for union. It may appear that there is ground to believe that were we united some serious evils now existing would disappear and still larger usefulness of the united bodies be secured, which, if true, constitutes an unanswerable argument for the union. That God has not forsaken us, but, on the contrary, has continued to bless and prosper us beyond measure despite our separation, may well excite our gratitude; but that his blessing would become less were we united is not a fair inference.

2. In favor of continued disunion it is further alleged that united the Church would be inconveniently large and unwieldy, and in danger of becoming corrupted in various ways—that great concentration of power is always hazardous. There is plausibility in the statement, enough to give it force; but must we accept its implications? Is separation on the mere ground of largeness a defensible position, especially when we take into the account evils which inevitably ensue? The absolute predominance of one sect in such manner and degree as to enable it to tyrannize over conscience is dangerous; but is this a case of the kind? Must the kingdom of God forever be broken into contending sects simply on the ground that unity is dangerous?

Against this view we allege that union is to be sought because in union is strength and in disunion is weakness, and because disunion without sufficient difference engenders causeless strife, and brings disgrace on the Christian name and cause, as such, with many other evils. It is alleged that these can be provided against by a geographical division. Were this possible it might in part remove the evil; but neither party will consent to this. They each insist that they shall have the freedom of the world; but this given, competition and conten-

tion become inevitable. It is not in the power or wisdom of man to prevent it. United, the ground of contention and its attendant evils ceases; remaining two, it must be perpetual. It is said, Why not live side by side, like other Christian bodies? The answer is plain; different families exist apart without feuds and in harmony; the same family cannot exist in severance without strife, because nature and providence intends them to be united; but if they could dwell together in harmony, it, for many reasons that will appear, is better that they should be united. It is the chief object of this paper to state these reasons.

3. It is alleged that the union of the bodies would render the General Conference so large as to be unwieldy and in every way inconvenient. To this it is answered, the remedy is provided in the organic law by reducing the ratio of representation if at any time it should become necessary, or by other methods at easy command. When providential occasions arise which demand new adjustment methods will not be wanting. If faithful to her mission the time is not remote when the Church will comprise millions where it now numbers thousands. Will division become a *dernier ressort*, or may she still retain her unity and devise measures for her new and ever-growing needs?

4. It is said, and with show of reason, that the time must come when there will be a Methodism for each country in which she plants her missions, that therefore there is a near probability of many divisions, and it is asked, Why then urge a union of existing divisions? To this we answer, Should our missions grow to such proportions and conditions as to enable them without our help to carry forward their own enterprises, and should the parent Church and the branches agree to separation, this would involve no friction to present an insuperable

objection. There would then grow up a federation and fellowship of Churches constituting a federated unity. The time doubtless will come for this ; and when it comes the proper method will be found. But why not, accepting this principle, allow the two Methodisms now existing to remain separate ? The answer is not difficult. The cases are not analogous. There may be no sufficient reason for preserving the organic unity of Methodism throughout the world. There may be reasons why it should not be preserved, why a federated union guaranteeing fellowship and helpfulness would be preferable. The same reasons might not exist for two Methodisms side by side in the same locality competing and striving together. Each case must be considered on its own merits. The law in each and every case is the same, namely : that should be done which works to the greatest good and which is attended with the least possible evil. This is the "open sesame" to the solution of all difficulties.

It is said that there is such a difference among our people in the different sections of the country—difference of temperament, thought, feeling, civilization, blood—that they cannot coalesce ; that therefore separation is better than union. Does any intelligent person gravely believe this. If the fact were allowed would it not constitute the strongest argument for union ? In what way could discord possibly arise from this cause. The people of each section would remain as they now are. The same ministers would occupy the same territory except as occasional transfers from one section to the other, by the wish of the Churches and ministers. The causes of discord would be removed by the union. This would be one of its most important results.

5. It is assumed that the smaller body would suffer in the union. How could that be possible ? It cannot be pretended that the mere fact of union would work to its detriment, for

there would then be no differentiation of smaller and larger ; the whole would share in the common good of the whole. Whatever accrues to the good of the whole would be the common benefit of each. The remotest member would share in the common welfare of the whole and of every part. All that united Methodism is and has would accrue to each constituent. The union once restored, a common *esprit de corps* would soon obliterate all memories of former separation, and every section and member would come to a common pride and joy of fellowship ; each heart-throb would vibrate to the remotest extremity.

The only form in which the smaller body could be put to disadvantage, that I have heard mentioned, is that they would be deprived of the honors which they now enjoy by a more powerful competitor—that is, the offices and emoluments of the Church would be denied them. Men are men even when most Christian, and are not to be condemned for concern for themselves in matters of this kind.

Is there reason for the fear? Is there not rather in the wider sphere of a greater Methodism, when consolidated into one, the best opportunities for the worthiest aspirations? That this is so will appear as we consider the reasons for the union.

A union consummated on right principles we believe would be a great good, and ask candid attention to the reasons which produce in us that faith.

The idea has been several times mooted of having two or three Episcopal white Methodisms on American soil, each assigned a geographical division of the country—one eastern, one western, one southern—the three sustaining federated relations similar to those of the States in the federal Union.

The thought has doubtless grown out of the unsatisfactory condition at present existing, and is an admission that some readjustment is a real demand. The principal reasons for the

suggestion have been hinted at already, namely, that one body would be inconveniently and possibly dangerously large; and the diversity of peoples in the different sections. Quite a number believe that this is the real solution of the problem. It is assumed that such an arrangement would remove all the causes and evils of friction incident to the present arrangement. The theory proceeds upon the idea that each Church would by compact confine itself to its own strictly defined geographical boundaries. The arrangement, it is argued, would prevent the dangers arising from overgrowth and from dissimilarity of tastes, and would avoid the difficulty of an unwieldy General Conference and the opposite evil of diminished representation, and would put no section at disadvantage as to the fair opportunity for its share of the honors of office; while at the same time it would avert all the scandals of interference and unchristian competition; that so the bodies could attain to a real and unembarrassed fraternity—could be practically one. The scheme proposes that the practical unity thus attained should be, by compact, further cemented by a free transfer of ministers from one section to the other by agreement of the bishops of the different sections and by the expressed desire of Churches and preachers, and that membership in the one should be membership in the common body.

With regard to missionary operations the plan assumes that it would be practicable that the three divisions should unite, so that only one Methodism should appear in our missionary ground.

The scheme as a theory looks plausible. Were it practicable it would fairly meet the demand pressing us; but who does not see that, simple in appearance, it involves such complexities as to make it unworkable, or, if workable, beset with manifold difficulties. What hope is there that the sections could be

induced thus to go asunder? How could the complex missionary work be carried forward?

If not absolutely impracticable the scheme, while an improvement on present conditions, when put in comparison with the simpler adjustment proposed of uniting the two bodies into one, seems to me immensely more difficult and in the outcome less satisfactory, and at last fails to provide for the most complete good easily attainable.

There is no probability that any such scheme will ever be adopted or even gravely be entertained. The main value of the suggestion is found in its tacit admission that something is needed, and in pointing out that the only practicable solution is a closer if not an absolute union of the two bodies.

At last action must grapple with the simple question, What can be done to make their relations more satisfactory? Every expedient will fail which leads aside from that simple issue. If there are difficulties they must be met and overcome. To the thing that is right no impediment can be insurmountable. Let us simply keep that point—*What is right?*—as the pole-star of our inquiry, and go forward with the assurance that when we find the answer the way will open to the proper action.

If union should be deemed desirable, of course the terms and method would remain to be considered, and would of necessity have to be such as to be equitable and honorable alike to both the high contracting parties, but this would not be *prima facie* impossible to parties intent on the consummation. There are difficulties, and embarrassing problems would have to be solved, but, convinced of the importance of the measure, these could not necessarily prove insurmountable. On the question of method for the accomplishment of a desirable object there will be difference of judgment. This is inevitable, but not necessarily fatal. Candid comparison of possible plans patiently considered

will bring the result. Simplicity of aim, patience, and time are the chief requisites. The duty of the hour is to set about the work earnestly. There is existing a general feeling that the union is desirable and that at some time it will be effected. There is a question as to whether the time has come. What we claim is that the time has come to consider the case. Doubtless there are some who are opposed to union at any time and under any circumstances. They sincerely doubt its desirability. The preliminary discussion must therefore raise that point. The main object of this writing is to point out reasons for the union in the speediest possible time.

(a) Procrastination will increase rather than diminish the difficulties. Delay is dangerous. *If the two bodies are ever to become one it should not be postponed.* So long as they remain separate the spirit of individualization will grow. This arises from the nature of the case. Thought and feeling grow by mere lapse of time into set forms, and custom becomes second nature. Separation begets estrangement. Little differences are taken on which acquire force and become hard to surrender or accommodate in proportion to their number. Already divergence is perceptible. It will increase and tend to become unmanageable.

It was a necessity precedent to restored union that old asperities should die out or lose their sharpness, and that the occasions for separation should disappear. Time has brought about both of these desirable conditions. We name therefore as

(b) A further reason for restored union that there is no longer any adequate reason for the continued separation. The absence of reasons for the separation is a strong reason for the union. If there are reasons, what are they? If there are no reasons, on what principle should the disunion continue? No one will pretend that a sufficient ground is that it is an existing fact



and should therefore remain. If it were a good in itself, or promotion of a good, that would be a reason for its perpetuation; but can this be pretended? There is then no assignable reason for it. No interest is benefited by it. No worthy end is any longer thereby served.

If the restored union would work harm of any kind, if it would be detrimental to any interest, if either party would suffer by it, there would then be a reason for weighing benefits against disadvantages and electing the greatest good; but when only good to all concerned seems apparent what ground is there for hesitation?

(c) It is affirmed that there can be no real union where there is not mutual inclination, but especially where there is aversion or disinclination. There is reason in this; but does it close the case? Is there no obligation to consider what is right? And where the parties are Christians is there no ground for the hope that when the right is discovered disinclination will turn into inclination and aversion into attraction? The simple question is, What ought to be? not, What is desired? Find the ought to be, and Christian desire will not be found a laggard. Nor is it certain that there is disinclination to union. The subject has not been discussed. There has been no opportunity to find what public opinion is. Multitudes in both sections are favorable. The sentiment is increasing. There is good reason to believe that a fair consideration of the subject will demonstrate that the feeling is wide and deep and rapidly growing. The current has turned already and is setting toward union. What is needed is simply calm, sensible, Christian utterance. This is not always easy to have, but there is in the temper of the times reason to hope that rash and improvident speech will not find favor.

Ultimately, and we think in the near future, such an adjust-

ment may be made as will satisfy the Christian conscience. If after a fair consideration of the subject the bodies conclude to remain separate, or if a closer federation seems best, or if three Methodisms seem best, one Southern, one consolidated colored, and one general, as at present, the effort to reach the best adjustment will at least have secured a better understanding and will leave the separate organizations to pursue their way on final and settled lines of policy, and our Church will have the consciousness of having exhibited the Christian spirit in offering honorable terms of reconciliation. Her way will then be clear to go forward in prosecuting her work with new zeal wherever her sons are found calling for her service. As the elder and larger she extends the olive branch on Christian terms and with a genuine desire ; if for any reason it is rejected there remains no more that she can do but to go her way, still cherishing the spirit of love and doing her work loyally and lovingly, and, whatever the event may be, history will do her honor for having sought the way of peace.

The further reasons about to be assigned in favor of organic union assumes that it is choice between remaining as we are and becoming organically united. These are undoubtedly the alternatives in sight.

It is important that this fact should be borne in mind. If the Churches do not unite their attitude and methods must, so far as appears, remain unchanged. In the nature of the case, the causes of irritation remaining, however desirable, a more fraternal feeling can scarcely come. Each party will retain its ground, not out of mere stubbornness, but from necessity. The two Churches will continue to strive on the same field. The same causes will continue to engender the same feuds and work the same evils. It is impossible it should be otherwise. Neither can withdraw. Each will take firmer and firmer root. This

must be, not of mere passion or determination, but on principle. There is no escape from the evils consequent but by union. This should be looked fairly in the face in the settlement of the question. The matter we have to determine is, Is the alternative such as we can wisely accept in view of all that it involves?

It becomes us to think seriously and act not on impulse, but on the highest principles of Christian conscientiousness. The choice we make now, it is probable, is final. There is hardly a possibility that either Church will make advances in the future if, now that the matter is mooted, it is quashed without respectful and gracious consideration. Henceforth, if the paths do not now come together, there is high probability that they will increasingly diverge.

1. The first point I make is, there are no *adequate* reasons against the union. So far as we can discover, and so far as has been alleged, we have considered the reasons assigned, and have found them to be insufficient as reasons, and to be viewed rather as hinderances and obstructive causes, not rational grounds.

If there is a single valid reason we have not been able to find it. This fact alone constitutes a strong argument. A fact which has no valid or justifiable reason for its existence on rational grounds should cease to be a fact; no justifiable reason for is a reason against it. There were reasons for separation; we do not gainsay that they were sufficient. That question is properly ruled out as irrelevant. What we affirm is that there are now no adequate reasons for the continuance of the severance, all the environments and conditions having changed. The absence—actual non-existence—of the reasons which laid a ground for the separation restores the reasons for union in all their original force, before the separation was effected, unless other reasons can be ascribed against it of sufficient weight to justify con-

tinued disunion. This, then, is the point in issue. We affirm that there are no such reasons, and that, in the absence of such reasons, continued separation is irrational and unworthy Christian bodies. It leaves no other ground for disunion but mere prejudice or passion or some other equally unworthy if not absolutely unchristian motive, or, if neither of these, a culpable indifference. There is a question of right and wrong in the case. Disunion is right or it is wrong.

If union would work evil to either party or put in jeopardy any interest secured by severance, or if it would be detrimental to the general interests of religion or the welfare of society, political, social, or in any other respect; if it would lessen the power of the bodies for good or militate against the freest and best development of the individual life of their constituents; if there would be a chance for them to be more and accomplish more for themselves and humanity remaining apart; if the union would introduce distraction and strife among them; if it would require any compromise of principle or any surrender of rights; if it imposed upon them humiliating or dishonorable conditions; if it required them to make intolerable sacrifices of property or influence or position without reason or compensation; if either party were unworthy the association of the other; if there were unovercomable antipathies of race or habits or color; if there were moral or physical or any other insurmountable objections—if for any of these or any other causes the union would be productive of evils greater than any good that might come from it, there might be justifiable ground for the continued severance; but if none of these things can be alleged what reason can be set up in its support? If, on the other hand, great evils come from the disunion and manifold good is hindered thereby, not only no justifiable reason exists for its continuance, but it becomes an inexcusable wrong, inexcusable in proportion to the evil

resulting and the good hindered. It thus appears that the question rises into ethical dignity. It is not a mere question of convenience or indifference or whimsical option, but one which must be determined by high moral and religious principles. Very great interests are involved whether we act or not, not merely transient personal interests, but profound interests of the kingdom of God, and, as we shall see, others co-related therewith. The parties in the interest are Christians—two great Christian Churches; it ought to be impossible for them to be moved by mere whiffs of passion in so grave a matter. They must act in the premises. Inaction is most positive action. The question forces itself on us. It is the simple question, What is duty?—that is, what is right under existing circumstances?

2. The second point I make is this: There being no adequate ground for the severance, it is seemly and natural that the bodies should be united, and unseemly and unnatural that they are not. They are Churches of the same origin, they have precisely the same faith, identical creed articles, the same ecclesiastical economy; essentially the same rules and regulations, the same religious rites and usages; their separation was the result of causes which no longer exist. These facts, if there were no other reasons, are sufficient not only to suggest the propriety but to warrant the plea for reunion. There are divisions enough in Christendom on unavoidable grounds to emphasize the taunt of our enemies that Christianity is a mere mob of contending sectaries. On what ground can we justify divisions when there are no discernible lines of separation? If we could exist alone and apart in local separation, as nations do, or if we had not the same name and creed, or if we had not a common family origin, there would be no particular reason for organic union; there might be good reasons against it—

reasons of propriety or deeper reasons of conscience ; but in the absence of all these, and in the presence of the fact that we are in all these respects one, disunion is unseemly and discreditable. As well two Christianities as two Methodisms, each competing with the other, and each fundamentally and almost in minutia of incidents identical with the other. It is safe to say that no one can thoughtfully consider the subject and avoid the feeling that the division is irreconcilable with the spirit of Christianity—that there is something fundamentally wrong in it, simply as a fact—something absolutely contrary to the teachings of our Lord in his great prayer for his Church, that they may be one.

3. But now, contenting ourselves with the simple mention of these points, I come to the consideration of a point of serious and weighty moment, to which I beg the earnest and godly attention of all who are involved : the union should be consummated because of the unavoidable evils of separation, evils great and grave.

Of the separation, simply as such, it is safe to say that there is nothing but evil in it—absolutely without good of any kind, to any body or any interest, and full of evil of many kinds. This is a grave charge, but on examination it is believed that it will be found true. There is good in each body, good of truth, good of piety, good of earnest Christian zeal, good of consecrated and useful work ; but all this is despite the evils flowing from their separation.

Of that no good can be predicated ; not one word of commendation can be pronounced upon it. It is good for nothing, springs from no good, proposes no good, effects no good ; on the contrary, it limits, diminishes, militates against good, is evil in its animus, evil in its tendencies, evil in its fruits, in its very essence opposed to good, a hinderance, an obstruction, a snare.

It hurts and harms the parties themselves in innumerable ways.

1. It harms the piety of the two bodies. There may be individuals who are not thus hurt. Some scarcely know or rarely think of any Methodism but that to which they belong. The harm that comes to them, if any, arises from the diminished tone of the piety of the body through this cause. They may nevertheless be real losers, sharing in the injury to the body. Some, despite the evil, may personally rise above it, and live in a higher atmosphere of love, where the malaria of narrowness and uncharity does not reach them. But beyond all question both the pulpit and the pew are largely most injuriously affected by it. Envy, jealousies, evil-speakings, suspicions, unkind feelings, harsh unchristian judgments, oppositions, exaggerations, misrepresentations, malignings, all uncharities, want of sympathy, co-operation, mutual helpfulness, rejoicing together in each other's welfare, prayers for each other and love unfeigned, are a brood of evils which infest the bodies to a large degree as the direct result of separation. We know that this is so. Is it right, is it Christian, is it worthy of men preaching the doctrine we preach and making the profession we make? Can we justify ourselves before God and our fellow-men in permitting the offense to remain when the remedy is at hand and requires but a little common sense and exercise of grace to apply it? Is it not a scandal to the Christian name and cause to permit it longer to remain? Let us search these questions in the fear and love of God, and is there any doubt what the answer must be? Can we without guilt continue indifferent to the answer? That our spirit is injured and our influence for good is impaired, and that thus the cause of God is hurt, we cannot but feel. What, under the circumstance, is duty?

2. The second point I note is, that disunion creates an

abuse by misuse of the talent God has committed to his Church for the salvation of the world. It plants in communities two rival forces, where one would do better work—two pulpits whose wrangles often disturb the peace and inflame the people with unfriendliness. It wastes God's money to carry on the feud. It oppresses the people to support contending factions. It works alienations and contentions. False representations are resorted to to raise funds to defray the expense of the unchristian warfare. I have weighed these words and know that they are true, not merely in sporadic cases. Both the funds and talents of the Church are squandered, not simply without returns, but often to the damage of the communities where the waste is made, when, were the occasion removed, one minister would be comfortably supported and would be able to carry on the work in peace and comfort, and the distracted community would become cemented in love and the Church would flourish as the garden of the Lord. Wasted means and worse than wasted energies by union would build the waste places, and convert discord into harmony and division into concord. Is it right to perpetuate this waste? Is it right to appeal to the religious sentiment of Christian people to furnish means, thus to be squandered—nay, worse than thrown away—to build churches and support pulpits as propaganda of strife? It is no reply to say that such is not the object, to garnish the motive with words of pious phrase. It matters nothing what the professed object may be, the effect is that which is here described in many cases, and is so unavoidably. It is no reply to affirm that such are not always the effect. This is admitted. Is it Christian to continue a policy where such effects do often exist, where the best Churches would be better without it, and where such abuses would cease entirely? The question is simply the better way. Which is the best use of the money of the Church and the pulpit power of the



Church? Which will make the best people and develop the highest life of the Church?

3. I name as a special phase of this evil that it works serious harm to the missionary energies and enterprises of both bodies, and to the Christian cause wherever they appear in heathen lands, and for evangelizing work in semi-Christian countries. The bare mention of this point is all that is necessary. It carries conviction without argument. There is not a field where the evil is not felt to be most serious. There is no practicable remedy but by the removal of the occasion. The evil is one which time will not cure, but must continue to grow with the ages. Two Methodisms side by side in any land and at any time can work only evil.

4. The next point I make is: The severance of these Churches works evil to the country in which we live. This would necessarily be so at any time and under any circumstances. Whatever brings weakness or harm or scandal and disharmony among Christian bodies without a real cause of principle works harm to public welfare and the nation at large. Contentions, even where principle is involved, and which therefore cannot be avoided, are often deplorable in their effects; but carried on among Christians in mere passion on partisan grounds the damage to welfare is incalculable, unsettling faith and begetting scorn of religion itself. The piety of a nation is its only safety. Whatever militates against it is inimical to its highest interests in the highest degree. But our country is especially open to injury from the strifes of these two great bodies because of peculiar circumstances. We have just passed through a great and frightful sectional war, in which the deepest feuds were engendered. Nothing is so difficult and nothing so important as the healing of these wounds. Every patriot feels it, and every statesman. These Churches, whether they will or not, repre-

sent sectional ideas and embody sectional feeling. Their continued separation carries on the war and strife after the armies have been disbanded and peace proclaimed. They are two great and influential bodies embracing larger numbers than any other denomination. Their power to insure the blessings of peace or to continue the fomentation of strife is paramount. Their disunion cannot but work harm and injury to public welfare and the nation's peace. Duty to the country at large, to the cause of religion, and to God demands that at the earliest possible time they should remove this great evil. It is in their power more than any single instrument to heal the wounds which are still festering. If they will they can speak the word of peace.

Can they as Christian bodies longer withhold that word? Their peculiar strictures of ecclesiasticism devolves upon them the responsibility of peace-makers. Can they without sin perpetuate strife?

We act not for to-day only, but for the ages. We are citizens of a great nation, the preservation of whose institutions depends upon the harmony of its parts. Can we permit our sect feuds to imperil that harmony without meriting the condemnation of our fellow-countrymen? If we are ever to have a perfectly united and happy country the reasons and sentiments which keep alive sectionalism must disappear, and we must come to feel that we are one people with common interests, divided by no lines, no North, no South. No one circumstance would more contribute to this result than the union of the two Methodisms dominant in the two sections. We plead for the union in the interest of the nation's future. The wisest statesmen have exhausted all the resources of their best genius, patriots have prayed and longed, commerce has lent its helping hand, orators and poets have pleaded, the best people have desired and yearned for peace

and healing. From rim to rim of the nations comes the cry for union of hearts and hands. The land is weary of strife. Only the brigandage of the nation in hiding-places foment hate and contention. Shall it be that these two great Churches, by causeless continued separation, shall alone, or only in company with the ignorant and vile, longer be the evil genii who fan the dying embers to keep them alive? Surely there is a better way

5. Disunion works evil especially to that large portion of our fellow-citizens and countrymen who differ from us in color. A race problem has grown up among us in the most aggravated form and beset with the most perplexing and embarrassing difficulties. The deepest interests of the nation are involved in it, and as Christians we cannot dissociate ourselves from it. It will tax the utmost wisdom of the highest statesmanship to bring it to a happy issue. Our denominational disunion in great part owes its origin to this very problem, and now adds to the difficulty of its just and Christian solution. I am extremely anxious to say the right word on this subject.

The colored race are a numerous part of our citizenship, aggregating not less than one tenth of the nation. In the section of the country where one of these great Churches chiefly exists and has always existed it constitutes more than one third of the entire population; in some portions of the section it is more than one half. Much the larger part were once slaves or are the descendants of those who were recently in slavery. It is but a quarter of a century since, by the arbitrament of war, their chains were broken. Angry sectional strifes long preceded their liberation. They are now free and still resident among their former masters. How to lift them into preparation for their new estate, and how to view and treat them in their new condition, is the *vexata questio*. The peace and future weal of

the nation is involved in its right solution. They are men, and entitled to all the rights of men. They are citizens, and are entitled to all rights of citizenship. But to secure these ends at once is the besetting difficulty. More than mere governmental power is needed. Law is necessary, but it is not sufficient, nor is any possible enforcement of law adequate. There is a great and necessary work to be done which will require time and the enlistment of the best energies of the best people, especially in the section where the difficulty mainly impinges and by the people who most keenly feel its soreness. Foreign interference in extreme exigencies may be needed, but unduly and unwisely exercised can do nothing but hinder.

At the close of the forever-to-be-lamented but impossible-to-be-avoided war there were real reasons for the presence of armed powers and missionary labor to protect and help these people. No one doubts this, and the reasons need not be recited. They were such as to justify—more than that—to require—the Methodist Episcopal Church and other Churches and organizations and individuals even in adopting measures of help for them.

From pure philanthropic, patriotic, and high Christian motives, at great personal sacrifice often, and the expenditure of millions counted by scores, possibly hundreds, of public and private funds, they went among them and befriended them, to help them to understand and enter upon the new life which had so suddenly opened to them. That under the environments it created friction and awakened hostility, and not unfrequently led to bloody resistance, is only to say that men are men. What could be done by force and foreign interference has been accomplished, if not always in the best way, we may venture to say characteristically, if not perfectly, by the best motives. All this necessarily engendered or kept alive sectional feud. It could not be

otherwise, and there is no occasion for imputing blame to either party where perfection cannot be claimed by any. It is better to thank God that we have got as far over the trouble as we have and waste no thought on mistakes.

What we now affirm is this: the time has now come when the disunion of these two Churches is hurtful to these people, which means that we could now better meet present emergencies by union. There was a time when it was impossible for us to join hands. Human weakness was not equal to it. It is to be hoped that that time has now passed, and that changed conditions has reared a platform on which we can stand together to complete the work which can never be finished without the union. To secure to them their rights and help them to preparation to enjoy them is not the work of a section, and never can be accomplished by a section relatively foreign. It must, for final success, enlist the whole nation as a unit in hearty and sincere co-operation. Methodism on many accounts, which need not be recited, must continue to have an important hand in the work, but while it remains a disunited body it practically excludes the Methodism nearest to them from participation in it by keeping alive the idea that it is unfriendly and unconsenting. The union of the bodies would speedily correct this injustice, and, being acknowledged and recognized as friends, not allies simply, but principals in the beneficent work, they would find their most powerful spokesmen and sympathizers and active helpers, not among distant strangers, but among their neighbors. No more fatal injury can be done to the colored citizens than the perpetuation of the severance of them from the sympathy and hearty co-operation of the people among whom they live, and nothing can cure that evil while they are taught to look to those of another section as friends protecting them from their neighbors. Let a great united

Methodism, especially strong and influential right about them, be recognized as standing for them and committed to their help, and the beginning of a real reconstruction will be reached, and sectional hinderances will be removed out of the way. In the best interests of the colored portion of our fellow-countrymen we plead for restored union of these Churches. The needed work for them is only begun. A long line of continuous effort remains. They have made hopeful progress, but immensity of need still exists. If they are ever to take their stand in a high plane of advancement and become an educated and prosperous race it must be by the patient toil and forbearance of their fellow-citizens among whom they live. The union of these Churches would be among the surest guarantees of this result.

5. The next point I note is : The union should be consummated because of the positive blessings that would flow therefrom, to the bodies themselves, to the common cause of religion, and to public welfare at large.

The abatement of evils is a positive good, but there are other and greater consequent goods which deserve to be mentioned ; they are many and great.

I do not name among these reasons that it would add to the power and glory of our name ; that it would place us foremost among the sects in number and political influence ; that it would make us dominant in all sections of the land ; that it would aggrandize us as a sect in any way. These are not motives worthy of Christian men. We neither desire nor aim at such ends. God has greatly blessed and honored us. He has loaded us with all the responsibilities we can bear. Our chief concern is that we may so demean ourselves as to be a blessing to the world in the honors he has put upon us and the power with which he has invested us. When we cease to be almoners of good

—a blessing to men—there will then be no more reason for our existence. He has given us a position and brought us to a time when we can add to all the past good we have been instrumental in doing—not merely continued usefulness in promoting religion among the people, but still greater usefulness even in these lines; but, more than this, to a position and time when we can do essential service to the strengthening of our national life and permanence and glory and extension of our free institutions; and still more yet when we can add new luster to the Christian name by the highest exemplification of the Christian spirit. This is our opportunity, that comes but once. All this will be achieved by simply laying down our petty strifes and by uniting together on the high plane of a single purpose, sacrificing prejudice and passion, of doing that which will glorify God and promote the best good of our fellow-men.

I name among the goods that would come from our reunion :

(a) It would send a thrill of joy and of renewed confidence and hope through the heart of the nation; patriots and statesmen would bless and honor us; all our sister-Churches would commend the act; the religious and secular press of the land would send pæans to heaven and hail it as a harbinger of good; North and South would share the common joy; it would open up a new life-spring to the nation itself; for all would recognize it not simply as a thing that is right and seemly and honorable in itself, but as the beginning of a better future for the religious and political welfare of our land, the beginning of the end of sectional alienations. No single event could occur that would impose more general and genuine satisfaction. From the day of its occurrence feuds would begin to die; gangrened and long-unhealed sores would begin to disappear; hearts would flow together long alienated; old loves would be rekindled; in a hundred thousand homes prayers and thanksgiving would

ascend; the kiss of reconciliation would gladden five million souls.

The old wall of sectional separation, whose frowning battlements seemed to defy all siege, have been providentially broken down, never to be rebuilt. Only the subsidiary fortresses of prejudice and passion which grew behind it and the *débris* of its ruin remain. These leveled, the mold of a new civilization would soon cover them from sight, and, by the attrition of contact and the fellowship of new thoughts and feelings, upon them would flourish a new age of loving emulation and harmony. We would thus soon become one people indissolubly cemented together, a common life-blood reaching to every extremity. Methodism, by separation, stands in the way; by union it would hasten the consummation of this beneficent result. Will she longer interpose an impediment? It seems to me impossible that she should assume this frightful responsibility. It will belie her spirit. She has from the first been distinguished for her heroism in every good cause, ready to sacrifice, to do and dare for the right. Shall her ancient fame be tarnished by failure in this her grandest opportunity? It will not. She will meet the expectation of the age and rise to the demand of the hour. Her hosts will come together, and under one banner they will give the nation joy. Massachusetts and South Carolina, ancient rivals, will cement the bond of a deathless friendship, and the lands of the gulf and of the mountains will shout together over the union.

(b) The next point I note is: The union will make a better people of both Churches. Freed from the parasites of separation, we shall grow into a better type of Christian manhood—be broader, more generous, more noble. A new life of energy and enterprise will come to us. Each will impart inspiration to the other. Animated with a common aim, and united in a



common purpose, we will grow stronger and wiser. Letting go all petty strife and partisan narrowness, we will rise to grander conceptions and do better work for God and humanity. Each has something to give which will add strength and beauty. The South will send some of its best brain and heart into the pulpits of New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, and other cities; and the North will transfer some of her best sons to the pulpits of Richmond, Nashville, New Orleans, and other cities of the South, and new life and new ideas will gladden the congregations of both sections. The glorious bishops of the South will stir the Conferences of the North, and my honored colleagues will delight the Conferences of the South; and we will wonder how it was that we remained separate so long, and marvel at the old thoughts of each other, while we grow sweeter and mellow and more Christian under ministries so unlike what in our alienation we imagined to exist. It used to be so. It will be so again. The South will bring greatly needed conservatism and warmth of zeal and simplicity of faith to the North, and the North will carry greater freedom and broader culture to the South, and each will thrive under the improved conditions. No section can thrive in isolation or alone.

(c) I name as my next point: The union, should it occur, will improve all our institutional interests, such as our educational foundations, missionary enterprises, publishing department—papers, magazines, and books; church-extension work, and all matters of this kind. The united wisdom of the body and its combined strength will bring larger results, and the Church will profit in liberality and intelligence as it gets the broader view and takes on its heart the enlarged work it is doing. The shelves at Nashville will be enriched by the wealth of the shelves of New York, and New York will add to its

treasures the precious things of Nashville. The great church boards will be strengthened by new accessions of thought and experience.

(*d*) Delivered from the wastes of friction and misappropriated energy, and inspired by higher motives, and combining all our forces to the simple end of furthering the kingdom of God in the earth, we shall augment all our power for good. We will no more degrade ourselves in mere partisan aims and unwholesome competitions, but will emulate each other in every section in Christian endeavors. We shall each become greater and stronger as we work to a common end. United, our combined influences will be felt in every good cause from one end of the country to the other. This power is put at our disposal. Can we waste it in strife without incurring serious guilt?

(*e*) I name as my last point, and greater than every other consideration: The union could not fail to secure the blessing of God if accomplished with a simple aim to advance truth and righteousness in the earth. Can any one doubt this? Would not heaven rejoice with the earth in the result? Nothing can be more certain than this. The Holy Ghost, that puts it in your heart and mine to desire it, would smile upon the union. The adorable Christ, who is the head, as we are the members of his body, would rejoice in it. We are not two by the will of God; however it may have been once, he calls us now to union.

These, inadequately expressed for the want of power to set them forth in all their strength, are some of the reasons which impel me to plead with my brothers to consider the subject without further delay. Keep in mind that the simple question to be decided is this: What is for the greatest good—what is right—what ought to be? The answer is to come from the Christian stand-point—not that of expediency merely. The

answer now returned is final. The interests involved are great, great as affecting Christianity at large, religion itself; great as affecting public and general welfare; great as affecting the Churches themselves. The demand is for high, honorable, heroic action, on the loftiest plane of motive, putting aside all prejudice and passion,

To achieve the best result all the parties in the interest will need divine help. The whole Church should betake itself to earnest prayers for heavenly guidance, but especially those upon whom the decision more immediately depends—the ministry at large. There is reason to hope that whatever the embarrassments to a right decision it will finally be reached, if not to-day, then in the near to-morrow. Let the discussion be conducted in temper and manner befitting the subject, and the parties upon whom it devolves—honestly, patiently, lovingly, without artifice, and with painstaking to exclude all merely confusing irrelevancies. The high court of history and of the greater public of Christendom will await the decision with profound interest, and will in turn affix its seal of approbation or disapprobation upon the actors and the action.

It, no doubt, will be that many who will read these utterances will see other and stronger reasons than any here named, or will be able to improve the statement of those mentioned. Let not the cause suffer by the advocate. Give it the advantage of your own best effort to arrive at the truth. This it deserves, and this your personal responsibility demands. So far as I now see I have with perfect sincerity and without prejudice done my best to help to a wise solution of the problem of duty. If you can do better, duty requires it of you.

If you for any cause entertain a different view from that herein defended it becomes your duty to give the reasons. Only reasons ought to have weight, and only reasons should be

employed. It is easy to weaken the force of truth by artifice. As Christians we dare not do this. It is not a matter about which we can aim simply at triumph without respect to means and methods. That is a low aim, and often determined by low arts. We aim simply to arrive at duty, not at carrying a point.

I close the argument, so far as it deserves to be called such, by appealing to the best that is in us to avoid every thing that would engender passion or in any way mislead the judgment. We be brothers, having but one interest to reach the wisest conclusion. Let us reason together as such.

If after mature deliberation the conviction should become prevalent among us that right and duty demand organic unity we should then stand face to face with a remaining perplexity, namely, how to effect the union. There would necessarily arise many questions and phases of difficulty. However profound the conviction, and, consequently, however strong the desire, differences will have to be adjusted; surrenders will have to be made; new lines of policy will have to be accepted; harmonization of little divergencies will have to be effected; some grave matters will have to be settled. Can we, after all, come together? There are always lions in the way to every measure aiming at the best. It is not difficult to create a panic, by alleging insurmountable difficulties in the way of plain duty.

What we need to do is simply to find what is duty. Duty is never impracticable; once ascertained the way will open. But the best way demands wise thought, as the performance demands brave purpose. It is well, therefore, to consider some things which will be helpful in reaching the proper method and for securing the accomplished end.

1. The first thing needed is, we must reach the firm conviction that the thing proposed is right—is the thing that ought to be.

2. We must determine that what ought to be not only can be but shall be.

3. We must determine that it shall be without surrender of absolute principle, since nothing ought to be which requires the surrender of principle.

4. We must avoid lifting mere prejudices or preferences into the dignity of principles.

5. We must not allow mere prejudices or preferences to stand in the way of manifest duty, but must be willing to surrender these for the accomplishment of the greater good. This will be the severest strain, but not beyond the power of sensible and Christian men.

6. While aiming at the ideal we must not commit the folly of refusing the possible best because we may not be able to reach the ideal perfect.

7. We must avoid pressing unreasonable demands as conditions of the union.

8. We must regard each other as equals, and be scrupulous to observe this in our manner of treatment.

9. We must see that no right of any is trampled upon or disregarded. A right is never achieved by resort or consent to a wrong.

10. We must avoid needless irritation by renewing obsolete contentions.

11. We must set about the work with cordial respect for and mutual confidence in each other.

12. We must proceed with a cheerful faith that what ought to be can and will be.

13. We must constantly keep a single eye to the glory of God, and in the whole proceeding seek his guidance and help.

These rules, which ought not to be difficult to God-fearing men, observed, we cannot fail of reaching a conclusion which will

be creditable to ourselves and will give joy to heaven and all good men on earth.

To bring the result to a happy issue the General Conferences of the respective bodies should order a commission of sufficient size, composed of an equal number of the wisest ministers and laymen and the bishops of each Church, to prepare a platform of union, which should afterward be submitted to a called General Conference comprising the members of both bodies ordering the commissions as a final body to pass upon and adopt the platform, unless some better method can be devised.

We believe that it is in the possibilities and easy reach of the Churches within the next few years to bring the union to a successful issue, and from the day the commission shall be agreed upon we have the belief that both Churches would begin to rejoice in the prospective union as a most happy foregone conclusion. From half a million homes and millions of hearts of our own people, and from pulpit and pew of our sister-Churches, prayers would ascend for its consummation. That very day, in anticipation of the event, feuds would begin to die, old loves would kindle new fires, happy peoples would gather into bonfires the old rubbish of hate and enmities, and a new life would thrill the long-withered veins and nerves of a reconciled nation.

The great boon is within easy reach. It not merely invites us, but commands us, to reach forth our hand and take it. If we will hear the divine voice calling to us, commanding us, it will be ours, and the old Methodism of our fathers will come again, and, with not simply restored but with renewed luster, will go forth on a new mission of conquest in our own and all lands. If with it there might come a new consecration to us; if, girding ourselves afresh, we might do away with all contention and give ourselves wholly to the work of extending the

kingdom—the simple and single work of saving men—what a power in our doctrines and economy God has put in our hands! No such agency, judged by its results, has ever been given to any people. Will we not learn to appreciate this? Will we be false to it? A thousand sirens are luring us. Will we commit the fatal blunder of listening to them?

Methodism, dear, beloved Methodism, behold your opportunity. The ages are waiting to crown you. All lands to the rims of the world are calling to you. The heavens are full of expectant watchers. Close up the ranks and in solid phalanx lead the battle for humanity. Hearken not to the siren. Let traitors and time-servers and grumblers have no place. Join hands, join hearts; renew your vows of fealty to the right; be heroes; humanity needs you. You have come to the age of ages; the greatest of the battles is set; treason fills the air; cowards and cravens and deserters fly their colors. O, ye sons of Wesley, assert your ancient fame. March forth an undivided band under your great Captain, who leads the armies of the living God; burnish anew your swords. Your fathers turned the battle aforetime and seized the prey from the enemy; millions in heaven and millions on earth bless them; let not their sons be unworthy of their sires.

We plead not for your sakes alone, but for humanity. The destroyer is abroad. Hydra-headed he leads to raven, and spreads terror and dismay. Many are struck with panic and faint with fear. Sons of Wesley, once again, dauntless with a faith that shrinks at no peril, close up the ranks and lead on to victory. Come from the snows of New England, come from her valleys and hills, whose peaks are first to catch the glory of the morning; come from the prairies and the slopes of the Pacific, where the last lingering day sinks into coming night; come from sunny Southland, always radiant with flowers; come all, with

loyal, loving hearts, and with united hands and hearts usher the day that shall never again have an evening, the day of a union that shall last forever.

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Since writing the preceding pages Bishop Merrill's book on "Organic Union" and Dr. Harrison's book on "Methodist Union" have appeared. They are both remarkable productions. The judgment herein expressed against rehabilitating old issues might seem to have reference to them. In fact, it had been written before their books appeared. The reading of them confirms me in the correctness of the position taken. Both of the distinguished authors seem favorably disposed to some adjustment which will approach a form of organic unity, but each, by opening old issues, has, we think, without intending it, probably embarrassed the case; still it may not be so. We have no word of censure.

The concluding chapter of Dr. Harrison's book on Methodist union sets forth a view adverse to that which has been advocated in the foregoing pages, and assigns eight reasons against organic union. The other portions of his book, while showing much learning and industry along certain lines, are entirely aside from the matters herein discussed, and relate to matters which, it seems to me, it is unwise and unprofitable to exhumate at this time, but especially in any attempt to bring about right relations between the two great bodies interested. Bishop Merrill's book is open to the same criticism. Its temper is in the main all that could be desired, and its tone is calm and judicial, as are all the utterances of its distinguished author; but it rehabilitates things which ought rather to be forgotten, and smacks of the influence of personal memories of one who was an actor in the scenes over which the curtain of oblivion should be drawn as speedily as possible. Surely the discussion of both books is



an anachronism, and, despite the ability and temper displayed, is not to edification. The talent to forget is sometimes of great value.

The reasons assigned by Dr. Harrison against organic unity are such as occur to all who think upon the subject. They are not without weight, but are certainly far from determinative, and as weighed against other considerations it seems to me fail to make a strong case against the theory advocated by us. What we ask is fair consideration.

1. The first named is admitted by the doctor himself to be without significance, namely, the danger from so large a body as an enginery for partisan politics.

2. The second objection is that in so large a body representation in the law-making body is reduced to an insufficient ratio or the law-making body is raised to unwieldy proportions. There is something in this, but we are not able to feel that the difficulty is insurmountable. Who can doubt that one third the present number would be entirely adequate to all the purposes of legislation, with a better chance at right conclusions?

3. The third reason offered is that the two geographical sections are so different that they cannot agree. Is there proof of this? Must we accept it as even probably true? The people of the two sections do differ in some respects, but is the ground of difference so radical that it will not yield to the influence of association, or that it demands that they should be two nations forever? We are reluctant to believe this.

4. The fourth reason is that the Church South is nearly as unanimous to-day as it was in 1844, and is prosperous and contented and simply desires to be let alone. Is this a reason? Prosperity is a reason for thanksgiving, without doubt. Is it a reason for continued separation? Is the desire to be left alone absolute proof that it is best that it should be so? All these

allegations had been anticipated, with others, and we find in their statement nothing new. In fact, I find myself unable to discover, in aught that has been said or written that has fallen under my notice any thing which constitutes a weighty reason against the reunion of these bodies. The embarrassment to the result is not in the reasons against it, but in prejudices and feelings which have been engendered and kept alive during years of strife. This is not so of one side more than the other. We have yielded to these influences too long. Has not the time come for a more rational course? Reasons may be overcome by stronger reasons; but how can we deal with prejudice and passion or mere volition? There is nothing left in such a case but to bow to the tempest and wait for the better time when reason and principle shall be restored.

Let us try to find a better way. The plan suggested by Dr. Harrison himself indicates a possible advance. If we can come together and compare our best and holiest thinkings, out of them a way will open.

Dr. Harrison closes his book thus: "Speaking as an individual, the writer would prefer to see four grand divisions of Episcopal Methodism in America, the Eastern, Southern, Western, and the Colored General Conferences, the whole Church bound together by an advisory Council, representing Conference districts, and limited to the discussion of interests common to all, without authority over any. Such federation we believe to be feasible and desirable.

"While we have the kindest feeling for every branch of the great Methodist family, we must approximate nearest to the Church (North) because of our system of government, and we think that there is no reason why an itinerant preacher should not be transferred from one section to the other, under agreement of the bishops of both Churches, without submitting to

the degrading process of withdrawing from one Church in order to join the other. The perfect independence of each Church is compatible with an arrangement by which, as an act of comity, mutual and reciprocal, such transfers could be made whenever demanded. But for the present, and as far into the future as it has been given us to see, the interests and welfare of our Southern Methodism imperatively demand the jurisdictional independence of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

“The subject of the organic union of all the Episcopal Methodist bodies possesses a charm for many persons. But there are so many difficulties in the way of such a consummation that it is useless to discuss the question in any proposition that looks to the absorption of ecclesiastical government under one General Conference jurisdiction.

“There is, however, a more excellent way. Let there be one ‘Methodist Episcopal Church in America’ under *four* General Conference jurisdictions: 1. The Methodist Episcopal Church, North, comprising New England and the Central States to the Mississippi River. 2. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, comprising the territory of the slave-holding States as they existed in 1860, or, if preferred, the boundary established by the ‘Plan of Separation’ in 1844. 3. The Methodist Episcopal Church, West, comprising all the territory west of the Mississippi River and north of the Southern boundary. 4. The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, comprising (1) the African Methodist Episcopal Church (Bethel), (2) the African Methodist Episcopal Church (Zion), and (3) the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America. These four divisions would be held in one Church organization by the *newus* of a Methodist Church Council, meeting once in four years, and in the year succeeding one of the General Conferences, so that there would be no conflict as to the time of meet-

ing, the Council and the Conference having its membership probably in the same persons. Let each General Conference jurisdiction be divided into council districts, with one or two, probably two, a layman and a minister, from each district, and the membership of the Council confined to fifty or sixty persons; the General Conference of each jurisdiction to elect the members of the Council; this Council to have no *legislative* or *judicial* functions, but to be an advisory body only, considering such subjects as appertain to the general welfare of the Church; the name or title of the Church to be in common, and a common law of transfer of preachers from one jurisdiction to another, without blame or prejudice and subject only to the appointing power dismissing and receiving.

“In such a division of the jurisdictional powers of the four General Conferences there need be no structural or internal change in any one section of the Church, and any modification, alteration, or addition which may appear desirable, and may not be chosen in another, if adopted by any one will in no wise change, abridge, or injuriously affect the rights of any other. Territorial sovereignty would inhere in the General Conference, and one General Conference could have no *legislative* authority over another.

“This plan would make us one Church, with more than four and a half millions of communicants at the present time, each branch numbering nearly the membership of the Southern Church in 1890, and with room provided for fourfold expansion.

“The partition of territory and members would be met with objections, more or less vigorous, according to circumstances. But there need be no violent displacements. Natural laws could safely be left to work changes of adaptation, and the institutions of learning or other enterprises now under the care of the

Church (North) could be continued until such time as all parties were ready for a transfer to the Church South. The Southern States are poor, the Northern States rich, but the balance of wealth will not always remain North. Nature has made the South the richest section of the Union, and as there is no longer a question about this reality of natural wealth the progress of the South will be more rapid in the next ten years than ever before."

The view here presented, or one in substantial agreement therewith, has been presented in the Church papers of both Churches. It is understood to have found much favor with our Southern brethren. Its chief value, we are constrained to think, consists in the proof it furnishes that in some way the problem must be solved. We do not think that it furnishes the solution, but it suggests something. On examination doubtless much of it would be found impracticable, and were it adopted serious evils would still remain; but it is not, therefore, without value.

The immediate thing to be secured is the appointment of a commission of not too great size of the wisest men of the several Churches, to discuss together all possible plans of union, and out of them to evolve one that will come the nearest in their judgment to the ideal, and then submit it to the united General Conference for amendment and adoption. When once the initiative is taken crude, undigested ideas will take form, and a plan will be born which will commend itself to the Church.

The things to be kept in mind now are: 1. There is urgent cause for immediate action. 2. The one guiding thought is to be, What is right? and, therefore, What ought to be? 3. Set the best men to work to consider the subject and report their conclusions.

So far is plain. When we have advanced so far the way will open for further progress.

It has not been my object to *discuss* any plans that have been presented, hinted at in the prints, or in conversations in lay or clerical circles, or those even intimated in this book; but, rather, simply to offer reasons for the consideration of the subject at this time, and more especially reasons for the final organic union of these bodies. I feel certain that in these respects what has been herein said largely voices the prevailing sentiment of the best minds in both sections, and as the subject is considered will more and more find favor.

Plans are an after-consideration, and when a competent commission has been formed will be evolved and matured. Let the whole Church pray for the right outcome.

THE END.



